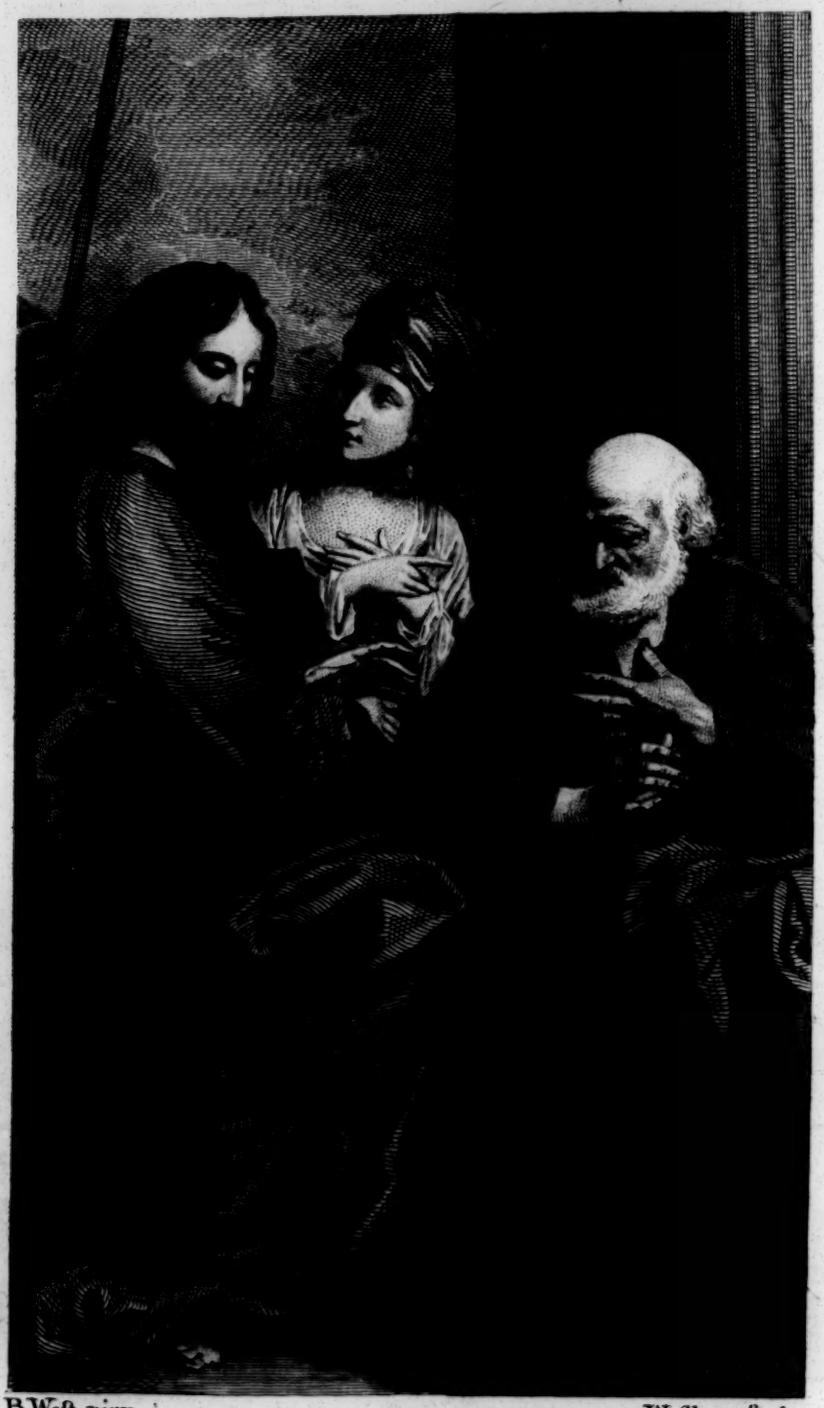
See Diſcourſe XIV. Vol. II.



B. Weſt pinx. W. Sharp ſculp.

1022.c.12

DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

BY JACOB DUCHÉ, M.A.

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DISCOURSE I.

St. LUKE, CHAP. vii. Part of VER. 22.

"TO THE POOR THE GOSPEL IS "PREACHED."

IN the verſes immediately preceding my text, we read, that John the Baptiſt ſent two of his diſciples to our BLESSED LORD, with this remarkable meſſage: "Art thou he that ſhould "come, or look we for another?" Anxious for their ſalvation, he wiſhed to have all their doubts, with reſpect to the character of JESUS, fully ſatisfied; and to make them acquainted, as ſoon as poſſible, with the nature and deſign of

his kingdom. Our BLESSED LORD, who well knew the ſecret views and purpoſes of the Baptiſt in this meſſage, graciouſly condeſcended to exhibit ſuch amazing proofs of thoſe mighty powers with which he was inveſted by his HEAVENLY FATHER, as muſt needs have convinced theſe diſciples of John, that he was certainly the MESSIAH that "ſhould come," and that they need not "look for another." For, "in "that ſame hour," ſays the Evangeliſt, "he cured many of their infirmities and "plagues, and of evil ſpirits; and un-"to many that were blind, he gave "ſight. Then JESUS anſwering, ſaid "unto them, Go your way, and tell "John, what things ye have ſeen and "heard; how that the blind ſee, the "lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, "the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed, and "to the Poor the Goſpel is preached."

The

The evidence which was here preſented, muſt have been ſtrong and convincing indeed, as it reſulted from the concurrent teſtimony of miracles and prophecy. Omniſcience, no leſs than Omnipotence, ſealed and confirmed the miſſion of JESUS. For the words of the Evangeliſt are a literal and exact accompliſhment of a remarkable prediction—Rapt into future times, the ſublime and evangelical Iſaiah had foretold, that the MESSIAH ſhould "preach "good tidings unto the meek, that he "ſhould bind up the broken-hearted, "that he ſhould proclaim liberty to the "captives, that he ſhould open the "blind eyes, and make the deaf to hear." One of theſe remarkable characteriſtics, by which the SON OF GOD was to be diſtinguiſhed at his appearance upon earth, I have ſelected for the ſubject of my preſent diſcourſe, viz. as a "preach-"er of Good Tidings unto the Meek;" or, according to the words of my text,

"a preacher of the Goſpel to the "Poor. To the Poor the Goſpel is "preached."

The original word, which we render Goſpel, ſignifies good news or glad tidings; ſo that the Goſpel of JESUS CHRIST means, the glad tidings publiſhed to mankind by this Illuſtrious Perſonage. To thoſe, who have been brought, by the kind diſpenſations of Divine Grace, to a proper ſenſe and conviction of their fallen ſtate, this Goſpel muſt be glad tidings indeed! From the original apoſtaſy of our firſt progenitor, we inherit a diſtempered ruined nature: our whole frame hath loſt its primitive health, and ſtrength, and beauty. The Goſpel of JESUS CHRIST informs us of a Medicine of Sovereign Virtue, by which this diſeaſe may be effectually removed, and the ruins of man completely repaired. JESUS CHRIST himſelf

ſelf, is the Univerſal Reſtorer; and the medicine which he applies, is his own Light, and Life, and Strength. "He "riſes upon our ſouls with healing un- "der his wings;" and, by the ſalutary influences of his Bleſſed Spirit, communicates his own heavenly virtues to the ſickly ſinking frame. "I will ranſom "them," ſays he, "from death: I will "redeem them from the power of the "grave. O death, I will be thy "plague! O grave, I will be thy deſ- "truction!"

Our natural ſtate is a ſtate of poverty, nakedneſs, hunger, and want of every kind. The Goſpel directs us where to apply for relief; and aſſures us, that we ſhall not apply in vain. It directs us to JESUS himſelf, and aſſures us, that it is he alone, who can make us rich; that it is he alone who can cloath our nakedneſs with his own pure and

ſpotleſs robe; who can ſatisfy our hunger with his bread of life, and ſupply all our wants out of the inexhauſtible treaſures of his Grace. Such, my Brethren, is, in general, the nature of that Goſpel, or of thoſe glad tidings, which in my text are ſaid to be preached or publiſhed to the Poor: "To the Poor "the Goſpel is preached.—Let us now proceed to enquire who thoſe perſons are, that come under this particular deſignation, "The Poor."

I. According to one ſenſe in which this name is uſed, we are to underſtand all thoſe, who, for wiſe and gracious purpoſes, are placed by Providence in low and indigent circumſtances, deſtitute of this world's goods, and conſtrained, by a painful ſeries of toil and labour, to earn a ſcanty pittance for the preſervation and ſupport of their animal life. To theſe, who, according to this more common acceptation of the word, are

are called "The Poor," the BLESSED JESUS tells us, that his Goſpel was more immediately preached.

During his pilgrimage upon earth, ſuch was the pride and arrogance of the Jewiſh Rabbies and doctors of the law, that they looked down upon the illiterate vulgar with a ſovereign contempt. They were too mercenary, to inſtruct them without a reward; and too vain, to aſſociate with them, whilſt they were poor and uninſtructed. Their lectures and expoſitions, ſuch as they were, they reſerved for their rich and honourable pupils, whoſe wealth might ſatisfy their avarice, whilſt a connexion with their ſplendid and powerful families would gratify their ambition. Their hatred of the Poor ſeems to have been of the moſt malicious kind: for though they took no pains to inſtruct them in their duty, they were careful enough "to bind "heavy burdens upon them, grievous

"to

" to be borne; whilſt they themſelves " would not even put forth one of their " fingers to lighten or remove them." Thus hardly treated, or contemptuouſly neglected, by their rulers and inſtructors, well might theſe diſtreſſed, broken-hearted Iſraelites, croud around the Meek and Condeſcending JESUS—well might " the common people gladly " hear" this Divine Teacher of Righteouſneſs! The heavenly leſſons that flowed from his bleſſed lips, were imparted freely, and without reward. They were confined to no order, ſtate, or condition of men. Their influence, like that of the great luminary of the day, reached the humble vale, no leſs than the aſpiring mount. His doctrine, " diſtilled as the dew; and, as the " drops of rain that water the earth," it fell alike around the lowly cottage, and the towering palace.

Our

Our BLESSED LORD, indeed, honoured the State of Poverty with peculiar marks of his regard. From the hiſtory of his birth it appears, that he came into the world in the moſt needy and indigent circumſtances. His Virgin Mother, and reputed father, though deſcended from the royal line of David, had nothing left of the affluence and ſplendor of their family. When he commenced his public miniſtry, the companions and diſciples he made choice of, were a ſet of poor illiterate fiſhermen. From ſeveral circumſtances related in the goſpel hiſtory, we find, that under the protection of Providence, he was ſupported by the contributions of his friends and followers. Himſelf gives us a lively but affecting picture of his own poverty: "The foxes have holes, "and the birds of the air have neſts; "but the Son of Man hath not where "to lay his head."

Doubtleſs,

Doubtleſs, it beſt ſuited the grand deſign of Infinite Wiſdom, in the ſcheme of man's redemption, that the SON OF GOD ſhould make his appearance in this indigent ſtate. This deſign was to reſtore fallen men to their primitive ſtate of innocence and glory; and in order to this, they were to be called from an earthly, to a heavenly life; from a worldly kingdom, to a kingdom that is not of this world. Their earthly nature was to be mortified and ſubdued; an heavenly nature was to be given them, and they were to be "created "anew after the Image of GOD in "righteouſneſs and true holineſs." Now a ſtate of poverty, a ſtate in which we are deſtitute of this world's goods, ſeems to be moſt favourable to this bleſſed change. For though an humble mind does not always dwell beneath an humble roof; though the poor do not always embrace a preached goſpel; yet our BLESSED LORD, who was intimately acquainted

quainted with human nature, well knew, that the more a man poſſeſſeth of the good things of this life, the more his affections are engaged to it, and of courſe, that the want of theſe muſt have a natural tendency to diſengage them. To the Poor, therefore, in a more particular manner, he preached his Goſpel, as he had reaſon to conclude, from their ſituation and circumſtances, they would be better diſpoſed to receive it. And to the Poor let his Goſpel ſtill be preached! for without this they muſt be doubly miſerable. The rich and the great have their conſolation, or ſomething that ſerves them for conſolation, in this world; "they, in their life-time, "receive good things:" but the Poor, who receive evil things, if they are without thoſe real conſolations which the Goſpel alone can adminiſter, muſt be poor indeed! If, whilſt outward troubles and misfortunes diſtreſs them, they ſhould be deſtitute of internal peace and joy; if their want of temporal comforts ſhould

be

be attended with a want of ſpiritual bleſſings, I know of no condition in life more completely wretched. "To the "Poor," therefore, let the Goſpel of CHRIST ſtill be preached!

II. But there is another, and perhaps the trueſt ſenſe, in which the word, poor, is here to be underſtood, viz. as it is expreſſive of that humble, ſelf-abaſing diſpoſition of mind, which leads men to feel and acknowledge their own natural weakneſs, want, and corruption. This is the beſt, and, indeed, the only preparative for the Goſpel of CHRIST. "They that are whole need not a phy-"ſician, but they that are ſick." We muſt firſt feel the poverty of nature, before we can deſire the riches of Grace. We muſt firſt labour under the guilt and miſery of ſin, before we can ſee the neceſſity, or deſire the comfort of a Saviour. It is well worth our while, then, to inform ourſelves, what is the nature

of

of this Poverty of Spirit, and in what manner the ſoul is exerciſed under it.

"By nature, we are dead in treſpaſſes "and ſins." A ſtate of death, is a ſtate of inſenſibility. We are poor, ſinful, corrupted creatures, and, at the ſame time, inſenſible of this poverty, ſin, and corruption. When the Light of the Spirit of God, therefore, breaks in upon the ſinner's heart, it opens a melancholy proſpect to his view. He thought before, that "he was rich, and had abun-"dance;" but he is now intimately convinced, that he is "poor, and miſe-"rable, and blind, and naked."—"Be-"hold I am vile!" is the language of his awakened heart. "I was ſhapen in "wickedneſs, and in ſin hath my mo-"ther conceived me. My heart is de-"ceitful, and deſperately wicked. My "iniquities are more in number than the "hairs of my head. The thoughts of "my heart are only evil continually.

"Woe

" Woe is me, for I am a man of un-
" clean lips, and a polluted heart!
" Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and re-
" pent in duſt and aſhes. LORD, what is
" man, that thou art mindful of him;
" or the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt
" him? Every man, at his beſt ſtate,
" is altogether vanity! As for me,
" I am a worm and no man. So fool-
" iſh am I and ignorant, as if I was a
" beaſt before thee. I know and feel,
" that in me, that is, in my fleſh, dwel-
" leth no good thing."

Such, my brethren, is the language of the " Poor in Spirit;" and ſuch the nature of thoſe exerciſes, which the ſinner muſt undergo as preparatory to his Reception of the Goſpel. To thoſe, who are thus Poor in Spirit, the Goſpel of CHRIST is preached: to thoſe who are thus Poor in Spirit, the promiſes of that Goſpel belong: " for thus ſaith the
" High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth
" eternity,

" eternity, I dwell in the high and holy
" place; with him alſo, that is of a
" contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive
" the ſpirit of the humble, and to re-
" vive the heart of the contrite ones.
" Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for
" theirs is the kingdom of heaven!
" Whoſoever ſhall humble himſelf as
" a little child, the ſame is greateſt in
" the kingdom of heaven. Come unto
" me, all ye that labour and are heavy
" laden, and I will give you reſt."
Come, thou poor, humble, contrite ſoul! thy SAVIOUR loves thee. Humility is the grace, that, above all others, renders thee comely in his ſight! It is the faireſt ornament thou canſt put on, to attract the eſteem of thy Heavenly Bridegroom! Art thou poor, he will make thee rich? Art thou humble, he will exalt thee? Art thou broken-hearted, he will heal, ſtrengthen, and comfort thee? Art thou naked, he will clothe thee? Art thou in captivity, he will ranſom thee, and ſet

thee free? His ſtrength will be manifeſted in thy weakneſs. His light will ſhine in thy darkneſs: and though thou canſt do nothing of thyſelf, thou ſhalt "do all things through CHRIST "ſtrengthening thee."

Permit me now briefly to apply what hath been ſaid, to the two claſſes of men I have mentioned in this diſcourſe, viz. the poor in worldly circumſtances, and the poor in ſpirit.

To you who are poor in worldly circumſtances, ſuffer me to ſay, in the language of Scripture, that "whom the "Lord loveth he correcteth, and chaſt-"eneth every ſon that he receiveth; that "though no chaſtening for the preſent is "joyous, but rather grievous, yet it af-"terwards yields the peaceable fruits of "righteouſneſs to them that are exer-"ciſed thereby."—Your lot may appear to you to be an hard one; but if you improve

improve it, you will find yourſelves bleſſed in the end. You are removed from a thouſand temptations, that ſurround the rich and great. True it is, you have temptations peculiar to your ſtate and circumſtances; but perhaps they are much weaker than thoſe to which men are expoſed by affluence or grandeur. Of theſe, however, beware! if they are indulged, they will gain ſtrength, and in time become almoſt invincible. Beware of envy! beware of malice! A grudging of our neighbour's fortunes or honours, betrays a want of that humility and true reſignation which muſt characterize the ſincere Chriſtian. Think not, that becauſe a man is rich, he muſt neceſſarily be proud, inſolent, and overbearing. The GOD that giveth riches, may ſanctify them to the poſſeſſor; and Poverty of Spirit hath been known to dwell in courts and palaces. Thank GOD, that you have but little of world-

ly wealth, and pray earneſtly for the riches of his Grace.

As for you, who are truly "Poor "in Spirit," who experience that humility, and ſelf-abaſement, which I have ſhewn to be ſo neceſſary a preparative for the reception of the Goſpel, I give you joy in the Lord! "As ſor-"rowful, be ye always rejoicing! As "poor, be ye always rich in CHRIST!" When you are moſt ſenſible of this poverty, you are then in the ſafeſt ſtate. "When you are weak, then are you "ſtrong." Ye are "eſpouſed to "CHRIST—Ye are no more darkneſs, "but now ye are Light in the Lord." Yours is the kingdom of GOD! Yours are the comforts of Grace here, and the ſweet hope of Immortality hereafter! Should envious clouds now and then intervene; ſhould a deep ſenſe of your own poverty be ſo powerfully revived, as to render you dark and diſconſolate—do not

let

let go your hope! Remember, it is to you the Goſpel is preached! JESUS, your Bridegroom, the light and life of your ſoul, hath only left you for a ſeaſon, that, in this widowed ſtate, you might feel your want of him, and long more earneſtly for his return, and love him more ardently when he makes his appearance again.

"Bleſſed are they that mourn, for "they ſhall be comforted!"—Sweet tidings to the diſconſolate Chriſtian! "Yet a little while, and he that ſhall "come, will come, and will not tarry." He will come in peace, dear mourner, to thine heart, and give thee a ſweet earneſt and anticipation of that Fullneſs of Joy, which he has prepared for thee, in his own kingdom of everlaſting Light and Love.

DISCOURSE II.

The Improvement of Times and Seasons.

Ecclesiastes, Chap. iii. Ver. 1.

DISCOURSE II.

ECCLESIASTES, CHAP. iii. VER. 1.

"TO EVERY THING THERE IS A
"SEASON, AND A TIME TO EVERY
"PURPOSE UNDER HEAVEN.

WAS this celebrated maxim of the ſagacious Preacher properly underſtood and obſerved by the ſons of men, it would doubtleſs have a conſiderable tendency to render them more attentive and vigilant, as well as more calm and tranquil, than they generally are, amid the variegated fluctuating ſcenes of human life. It would lead them to make the

the beſt uſe and improvement of that rapid ſucceſſion of events and occurrences, with which the preſent period of their exiſtence is diverſified. It would teach them, that betwixt the cradle and the grave, betwixt the birth and death of man, is the grand and awful interval, in which his beſt intereſts and higheſt happineſs are to be ſecured or loſt for ever; and that his All depends upon a faithful improvement of thoſe "times and ſeaſons," in which the ſeveral purpoſes of Heaven, with reſpect to his true felicity, are to be executed.

Though it ſhould ſeem from the text, as well as from the enumeration of particulars in the ſucceeding verſes, that theſe "times and ſeaſons," as well as the purpoſes to which they are adapted, were unalterably fixed, and that nothing could be done on the part of man, to haſten or retard, to proſper or defeat

defeat them; yet, if we conſider the whole drift of the argument in this book, the connection of this chapter with the preceding and following ones, and particularly what is ſaid at the cloſe of the enumeration, we muſt be convinced, that all theſe "purpoſes, times, "and ſeaſons," are placed before the will of man, and that he hath it in his power to improve or neglect them, to draw forth good or evil from them, and thus to eſtabliſh his own happineſs, or his own miſery, for ever.

"What profit," ſays the Preacher, "hath he that worketh in that wherein "he laboureth?" If all things are fixed by an unalterable decree, if this ſucceſſion of events will certainly come to paſs, independent of any will of mine; what part is left for me to perform? "I know," replies the experienced Sage, "I know that there is no good in them, "but for a man to rejoice and to do "good

" good in his life." I know that all theſe occurrences, whether they be in the natural or the moral world, are intended to adminiſter, to the wiſe and good man, ſo many opportunities of calling forth a delightful train of virtuous joys in his own breaſt, and of enabling him to communicate them to his brethren.

Was a mere natural philoſopher to take up the premiſes of the Preacher, what concluſion do you imagine he would draw from them? Why truly he would tell you, that there was no real diſtinction betwixt moral and natural good and evil, that one happened by the ſame inevitable neceſſity as the other, that we muſt take things juſt as they come, and that with reſpect both to good and evil, " whatever is, " is beſt."

Conſidering

Conſidering themſelves merely as creatures of this world, born for no higher employments than animal inſtinct enjoins, ſuch reaſoners could form no other concluſion. And yet they talk of virtue—and yet they recommend the practice of it to their deluded pupils—But what is their virtue? What is the idol, to which they would have mankind bow the knee? It is at beſt but a ſort of ſullen content, an affectation of Stoical apathy, a mock reſignation of they know not what, to they know not whom, without the leaſt tincture of that Divine Sweetneſs and Compoſure, which ſooths and delights the hearts of thoſe, who "look "for a better country, even an Heaven-"ly one."

On the other hand, the ſpiritually enlightened philoſopher conſiders himſelf as an heir of glory, as well as an heir of corruption; a child of GOD, as well

well as a child of the duſt; a citizen of Heaven, and a partaker of the Divine Nature, as well as a citizen of earth, and a partaker of the ſame nature with the beaſts that periſh: and therefore he makes every ſtate and relation, every event and occurrence of his preſent life, read him ſome ſalutary leſſon, or awaken ſome pious thought, ſome good and virtuous ſenſibility, all which help to fit and prepare him for a higher and happier life. He ſuffers no portion of his precious time to be wholly occupied by worldly cares and anxieties, or to ſteal away unnoticed and unimproved.

This being the general doctrine implied in my text, let us endeavour ſeriouſly to apply it to our own particular practice.

And is there, indeed, "to every "thing a ſeaſon, and a time to every "purpoſe

" purpoſe under Heaven?" Does every moment come to us charged with ſome important duty? And are the minuteſt occurrences of every day, the very ſeaſons, in which ſome purpoſes of eternal conſequence are to be anſwered? —Gracious GOD! What are we then about? Eating, drinking, ſleeping—eating, drinking, ſleeping again!—This is certainly the caſe with the liſtleſs and enervated ſons of ſloth. Times and ſeaſons are nothing to them. At leaſt they think of no other purpoſes, to which they can be adapted. Give them but a plentiful repaſt, and a pillow of down—theſe are their virtue, their Heaven, and their GOD!

As to men of buſineſs, who are perpetually toiling and buſtling on the crouded ſtage of life, who " riſe early, " and go to bed late, and eat the bread " of carefulneſs," they cannot, indeed, be charged with the neglect of times

and

and ſeaſons. To the compting-houſe, and the exchange, they know that particular hours are to be devoted. The moment of cloſing or refuſing a contract, the times and ſeaſons of managing their traffick to the greateſt advantage, they moſt ſeriouſly and punctually obſerve and improve.

The ſons and daughters of pleaſure, too, are far from being unacquainted with, or inattentive to, "times and ſea-"ſons;" and the man of ambition knows their importance ſo well, that he moſt faithfully avails himſelf of them to aid his aſpiring views, and carry his ſelfiſh purpoſes into execution.

But alas! theſe times and ſeaſons are only ſuch, as have reſpect to the purpoſes and intereſts of the preſent world. Were they indeed obſerved and kept, in ſubordination to the ſuperior intereſts of a ſuperior world; and would men but turn their thoughts with equal

chearfulneſs

chearfulneſs to the times and ſeaſons, in which the calls and purpoſes of Virtue, Goodneſs, Heaven, are to be anſwered; they would then act a truly wiſe and ſenſible part, even that of immortal ſpirits, travelling through the vale of mortality, attentive indeed to the common exigencies of their pilgrim ſtate, but infinitely more attentive to the acquiſition of thoſe tempers and qualities, that will ſecure them an happy reception in the world to which they are haſtening.

Indeed, my brethren, were we once captivated by the lovely form of Virtue; did we know her origin to be Divine, the offspring of GOD, made manifeſt in his only begotten Son JESUS CHRIST, and by him, through the Eternal Spirit, communicated to that whole race of fallen beings, which inhabit this globe of earth; did we know, that theſe communications of Virtue were made

" at ſundry times, and in divers man-
" ners;" that there is not a day, nor an hour, nor even the moſt ſeemingly trifling occurrence of a day or an hour, which does not preſent us with ſome call from the Author of Goodneſs, or ſome opportunity of imitating him in the practice of it; did we know and feel theſe truths, we ſhould certainly avail ourſelves of theſe affectionate warnings of Heaven, and endeavour to anſwer the bleſſed purpoſes, for which they were ſent.

There is nothing ſo plain and obvious to a thoughtful mind, as True Religion. It meets us in every thing we hear or ſee. Times and ſeaſons are never wanting. When we riſe from our beds in the morning, the ſweet ſerenity, which nature uſually wears, one would think, muſt neceſſarily communicate itſelf to our ſouls, and by making us feel ſomething of Heaven, prompt us to lift up our hearts to the

King

King of Heaven in ſome grateful ejaculation, for his preſervation of us during the death-like interval of ſleep; or ſome ardent petition for the comfortable aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, throughout the buſineſs and duties of the day.

And yet, alas! how many iſſue forth from their chambers with hearts equally inſenſible to the ſweet ſerenity of outward nature, and the ſweeter emotions of gratitude and love! Intent ſolely on the purſuits of a worldly life, they neglect the firſt time and ſeaſon, that preſents itſelf to them; and the firſt grand duty, to which this time and ſeaſon call them. But ſurely they can expect nothing of Heaven throughout the day, who ruſh into the world without Heaven in their hearts. And ſo indeed it turns out in the event. The man, who keeps his heart ſhut againſt the firſt calls of GOD and Goodneſs, finds himſelf more unwilling to

open at the ſecond: and though he meets with many and many a tender invitation to Virtue, in his family, among his friends and neighbours, among the poor, the ſick, and the afflicted, yet his worldly ſpirit follows him whereſoever he goes; he lives in a conſtant habit of inattention to the times and ſeaſons, and ſuffers every excellent purpoſe to which they are adapted, to be entirely defeated with reſpect to himſelf.

Not ſo the vigilant diſciple of the BLESSED JESUS. He knows the extent and depth of the Preacher's maxim, that "to every thing there is a ſeaſon; "and a time for every purpoſe under "Heaven." Far from neglecting any neceſſary engagements of his earthly life, he moſt punctually diſcharges them all: for even in theſe, he finds that his ſoul can enjoy communion with his GOD. From his morning's meditation, he

he walks forth with meekneſs and affection in his heart, and ſweetneſs and ſerenity in his countenance, to mingle in ſocial intercourſe with his family, and the friends whom he loves. To theſe he unfolds every tender feeling of his breaſt; to theſe he imparts every innocent endearment, which virtuous love can inſpire: delighting and delighted, he gives and receives ſuch joys, as Angels know and feel.

The ſame amiable tempers and diſpoſitions manifeſt themſelves in his general intercourſe with mankind; and illuminate and ſweeten every ſtate and condition of life, which he is called to ſuſtain. If ſome purpoſe of Heaven is to be anſwered by proſperity, he receives it with an humble heart, as "a loan lent him from the LORD," to be applied for the relief and comfort of his brethren: if by adverſity, he bleſſes the hand that ſtrikes, and

ſuffers not the painful precious ſeaſon to paſs unimproved. The time of ſpiritual conſolation, and the ſeaſon of ſpiritual deſertion, he is equally thankful for to his Heavenly Father; for he knows they are both alike neceſſary to his ſpiritual health and progreſs. Thus faithfully improving every time and ſeaſon, as it preſents itſelf, he riſes at length out of the vanity of all time, into the riches of eternity.

To conclude. We all know ſufficiently well, and are careful enough to improve the times and ſeaſons, which bring worldly matters to our view. We are not ignorant, that "there is a time "to eat, and a time to drink, a time "to plant, and time to reap," a time to be rich, and a time to be great, a time to be buſy, and a time to be gay. But, O let us remember, that there is alſo a time to die—that when this time comes, it will avail us little

tle, "what we have eat, or what we "have drank, or wherewithal we have "been clothed;" whether, in our paſſage through this vale of miſery, we have been clothed in purple, or in rags; whether we have fared ſumptuouſly in a palace, or dwelt penuriouſly in a cottage. The only conſolation that we can poſſibly receive at that dread hour, muſt be derived from a conſciouſneſs of having availed ourſelves of the opportunity, which the Grace of GOD hath afforded us, of being and doing good; and from a ſenſibility of our own nothingneſs, and the All-ſufficiency of Redeeming Love.

If we have been ſo happy as to have ſeen, with ſpiritual eyes, the Salvation of GOD in CHRIST, and to have attended to the frequent openings, calls, and warnings of Eternal Love, at various times and ſeaſons; if, from a deep ſenſe of the poverty of nature, we have lived

continually upon the riches of GOD's Free Grace in CHRIST, and, as we have freely received, freely imparted to all around; if, with Enoch, "we have "walked with GOD," and trod the ground of Heaven, if I may ſo ſpeak, whilſt we have been ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth—then, indeed, we may depart in peace; and lay down our weary heads to ſleep the ſhort ſleep of death, in ſure and certain hope of waking in the mild regions of Celeſtial Light and Love.

DISCOURSE III.

The Universal Shepherd.

Isaiah, Chap. xl. Ver. 10, 11.

DISCOURSE III.

ISAIAH, CHAP. xl. VER. 10, 11.

"BEHOLD! THE LORD GOD WILL
"COME WITH STRONG HAND, AND
"HIS ARM SHALL RULE FOR HIM:
"BEHOLD! HIS REWARD IS WITH
"HIM, AND HIS WORK BEFORE
"HIM. HE SHALL FEED HIS FLOCK
"LIKE A SHEPHERD; HE SHALL
"GATHER THE LAMBS WITH HIS
"ARM, AND CARRY THEM IN HIS
"BOSOM; AND SHALL GENTLY
"LEAD THOSE THAT ARE WITH
"YOUNG."

THESE words exhibit to our view ſome of the moſt lively characteriſtics of that Illuſtrious Saviour, by whoſe bleſſed incarnation, our fallen race are become again entitled to that long-loſt

long-loſt inheritance, which had been forfeited by ſin; and by whoſe Redeeming Proceſs in their ſouls, they are rendered capable of enjoying it. In the preceding verſe, the Prophet calls upon "Zion, to get up into the high "mountain; and upon Jeruſalem, to lift "up her voice with ſtrength, and not to "be afraid; and to ſay unto the cities of "Judah, Behold your GOD!" The external ſenſe of this prediction was fully accompliſhed in the incarnation, nativity, perſonal appearance and miniſtration, of the HOLY JESUS, in Jeruſalem and the cities of Judah; whilſt its internal ſenſe has been fulfilled, and is fulfilling, in the hearts of all thoſe, who ſpiritually behold this Incarnate GOD, and meekly ſubmit to his ſaving energy in their ſouls. As the higheſt encouragement to ſuch a conduct as this on the part of man, the illuminated Prophet proceeds, in my text, to point out the perſonal character of this Great Deliverer,

together

together with the manner in which he opens his powers and virtues in the human heart, triumphs over all oppoſition, accompliſhes the ſalutary work he has undertaken, and, by a moſt gentle and condeſcending proceſs, reſtores his beloved offspring to their original ſtate of Heavenly Life and Glory.

"Behold! the LORD GOD ſhall come "with ſtrong Hand, and his Arm ſhall "rule for him."

The miſtaken Iſraelites, to whom theſe words were primarily addreſſed, vainly aſcribed to them a temporal interpretation, and looked for a deliverer, whoſe conquering arm ſhould effectually reſcue them from the earthly powers to which they were tributary. But the true children of faithful Abraham, wait for the ſpiritual accompliſhment of this prophecy in their hearts; and ſee and feel "the ſtrong Hand" of their REDEEMER,

REDEEMER, in that inward oppoſition which he raiſes in their breaſts, to all the evil deſires and corrupt paſſions of human nature. Light uncreated breaks forth amid the depth of nature's darkneſs, and reveals to trembling mortals thoſe ſtrong fortreſſes, which the prince of darkneſs hath been erecting within them, and which nought can overcome, but "the Hand and Arm" of their delivering GOD.

"Behold! his Reward is with him, "and his work before him!"

This Work is no other than the complete deliverance of man from the captivity of ſin and Satan. This Reward is no other than the glorious acquiſition of thoſe loſt or wandering ſouls, who were originally his by creation, and are now doubly ſo by Redemption. You may obſerve that the Prophet ſeems to dwell upon the Strength, the

the Power and Majeſty of this Deliverer. He repreſents him as coming with a ſtrong Hand: and, indeed, ſuch is uſually his firſt appearance in the ſinner's heart. David ſpeaks of this firſt appearance, in the moſt awful and alarming terms: "the arrows of the "Almighty ſtick faſt in me, and his "hand preſſeth me ſore."

The firſt feelings of an awakened and convicted conſcience are painful and agonizing indeed; for they are, as hath already been ſaid, the breaking forth of Heaven's Majeſtic Light upon the benighted ſoul, which ſhakes nature to her very center, and diſcloſes every hidden receſs to which conſcious guilt flies from its approach. But when viewed with ſteadineſs and compoſure, and received with chearfulneſs and thankſgiving, it ſoon becomes as mild and ſweet as the radiance of the riſen day after a dark and tempeſtuous night. Hence it is, that in the next verſe we find

find the dignity and majeſty of this auguſt Perſonage ſweetly tempered with condeſcenſion and love, and melting into heavenly meekneſs, gentleneſs, and compaſſion.

" He ſhall feed his Flock like a " Shepherd: he ſhall gather the Lambs " with his arm, and carry them in his " boſom; and ſhall gently lead thoſe " that are with young."

Perhaps there is not an image in the whole world, that the Prophet could have choſen, which would have been more beautifully expreſſive, than this of that ineffable tenderneſs and care, which the SON OF GOD is perpetually exerciſing towards his redeemed offspring. I would not chuſe to dwell too minutely upon this ſimilitude, but would wiſh to make a juſt and not fanciful application of the ſeveral parts.

" The

" The Flock" here mentioned, can be no other than our whole fallen race, who by virtue of that " incorruptible ſeed," that was inſpoken into the firſt Adam, are put into a capacity of regaining Eternal Life, through the Redeeming Power of CHRIST, their ſecond Adam and heavenly progenitor. The free gift of GOD IN CHRIST, is as univerſal as the fall: and though I am far from aſſerting, that all men will be ſaved, yet Scripture ſufficiently warrants me to aſſert, that all men might be ſaved, if they would; or, in other words, that there is in every man, that is born into this world, a hidden power or capacity of being " born again" into an higher and heavenly world. Sincerely to be pitied is that narrow heart, which cannot receive this large and luminous truth; but would confine the LOVE OF JESUS within the ſcanty limits of a partial redemption. No, " He feeds his Flock like a Shep-" herd." He adminiſters to every hu-

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man ſoul the nouriſhment it needs; in ſuch proportion, indeed, as it is capable of receiving it, and in ſuch a way as is beſt ſuited to its particular ſtate and circumſtances.

Do you think the Savage that roams the howling wilderneſs, is deſtitute of his Paſtoral Care? Do you imagine, that the cloud of ignorance and error, with which he is enveloped, conceals him from his Father's penetrating eye? No —the Heavenly Ray frequently darts through the obſtructing medium: the Celeſtial Manna drops like ſilent dew, to cool the fiery ſoil of nature: the grim viſage of the painted warrior is changed into more than female ſoftneſs; the tear of ſympathy ſtarts through the reluctant eye-lids; and the man, yea the Angel, ſhines through the brute.

O Shep-

O Shepherd of Iſrael! are not theſe, then, of thy fold? Are they not alſo thy children, nouriſhed by thy heavenly food, and ſometimes manifeſting thy own ſweet and heavenly tempers? —Haſten, O haſten the happy time, when theſe wandering ſheep ſhall be gathered to thy flock; and they, with us, ſhall know and feel, that we are all but one Fold, belonging to one and the ſame Heavenly Shepherd!

But though the Shepherd's Love is thus univerſal, and all men are the objects of his Paſtoral Care; though they are all his children by redemption, all ſupplied with proper food and nouriſhment from his tender and beneficent hand; yet all do not alike follow the "Shepherd's Voice;" all are not equally willing to be fed with his "Bread "of Life." This difference in the conduct of men, does not altogether proceed from any difference in their out-

ward circumſtances or their outward modes of religion. The Heathen and the Chriſtian would, in this reſpect, be upon an equal footing, were it not that the latter is favoured with an external Revelation, acquainting him with what the former can only know by an internal ſenſibility. The motives of the Chriſtian, therefore, muſt be more in number, and far more powerful than thoſe of the Pagan, upon whom the Light of an outward Goſpel hath not yet ſhone. But then let it be remembered, that that "Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the "world," ſhines equally in every breaſt, by whatever various names it may be called; and nought hinders it from being equally efficacious to the ſalvation of all, but what the Scripture hath ſo clearly told us: "Light is come into "the world; but men loved darkneſs "rather than light, becauſe their deeds "were evil."

Aſk not, therefore, why there are ſo many different religions in the world, or ſo many different ſects of thoſe that profeſs the ſame religion. There never was, there never can be, but One True Religion in the univerſe, and that eternal and immutable as GOD himſelf. And what is this, or what can it be, but "the will of the creature fully "and implicitly ſurrendered to the will "of the Creator;" knowing, that as all Goodneſs is centered in him, ſo no being in the whole compaſs of univerſal nature, can be good, but by an Influx from him? A meek, holy, reſigned waiting upon their Creator, as ſo many living forms, empty of themſelves, but to be filled out of the Fulneſs of GOD, is the Religion of Angels. A perpetual adherence to themſelves, and not to GOD, hungering after and feeding upon their own dark empty fiery natures, inſtead of the luminous meek and chearful element of Heaven, is the ſtate of de-

vils—and, I muſt needs ſay, the ſtate of man, when his will is turned from his GOD.

And hence we are furniſhed with an infallible criterion, by which we may diſtinguiſh true from falſe religion; or, in other words, by which we may know, whether we are or are not receiving Spiritual Nouriſhment from the SHEPHERD OF SOULS. For it evidently follows, from what hath been ſaid, that we have a two-fold ſtandard of Eternal Truth, viz. the Will of GOD revealed by a Birth of his SON in our hearts; and the ſame Bleſſed Will revealed in outward Scripture, as a perpetual uniform teſtimony to theſe inward Dictates of Heaven. Here we ſtand upon firm ground, unſhaken by infidelity on the one hand, or the vain pretences of falſe enthuſiaſm on the other: we are conſcious of a ſuperior nature, and of our connections with a

ſuperior

ſuperior world. We are of the Flock of JESUS—he is our true and only Shepherd. He feeds us—with what?—with himſelf—with his own "Fleſh and "Blood," his own Heavenly Nature; and we can diſtinguiſh our growth in him, by our growth in Grace, and by a living conformity to his holy tempers and diſpoſitions.

Deceive not yourſelves, ye proud and high-minded viſionaries, by reſting your hope of ſalvation upon a few tranſient animal fervours, or a vain aſſurance that ye belong to CHRIST, and are born again, becauſe ye have an outward faith in him as an outward Saviour, and have felt ſome little momentary joy, from a vain opinion, that your ſins were inſtantaneouſly forgiven. The forgiveneſs of your ſins, is and can be nothing leſs than the Change of your Nature: Meekneſs, Humility,

and Love, are the firſt and the laſt, the ſure and infallible marks of this change.

Deceive not yourſelves, ye boaſting infidels! by glorying in the ſufficiency of reaſon, and what you call the dignity of nature. Reaſon, with all its efforts, can no more bring one ſpark of Goodneſs into your hearts, than it can bring one ray of light into your eyes, or one breath of air into your lungs. It may contemplate them, when there, but they muſt be born from another ſource. As to your boaſted dignity of nature, Goodneſs alone is real dignity; and All Goodneſs is derived from him, who is the only Eſſential Good. Without this, Satan himſelf is more dignified than ye are. Your rejection of Divine Revelation is not to be wondered at. Till you have diſcovered your own natural weakneſs and inſufficiency, and been brought to feel, that this can only be ſupplied from Heaven,

Heaven, ye will never be ſincerely diſpoſed to make an impartial enquiry, to "ſearch the Scriptures," and being convinced of their authority, to ſatisfy yourſelves from them, that the JESUS there revealed, is indeed the Shepherd, by whom alone all your wants can be ſupplied, who alone can "lead "you into green paſtures, and feed you "by the waters of comfort!"

Let the meek and humble-minded Chriſtian "lift up his head and look up." He need not, he does not, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, "run here and there "for food; and grudge, becauſe he is "not ſatisfied:" the wants he feels, reaſon, he well knows, cannot ſupply; the comforts he aſpires after, are ſuch as the world cannot give. Wherever his Shepherd leads, he is content to follow: he is ſenſible of his preſence, in darkneſs as well as in light. The evils by which he is oppreſſed, he is

ſatisfied

ſatisfied to bear, becauſe his deliverer is ever at his ſide. He leaves it to him, to continue or remove them, when, and in what manner he pleaſes; being well aſſured, that, when "patience hath done its perfect work," the time of reſt and uninterrupted joy will ſucceed. O how ſweet to walk the wilds of nature, with ſuch a Companion and Guide! The thorny paths of adverſity, the ſtorms of temptation, the doubts and fears of trembling nature, yea, the rudeſt aſſaults of the Prince of Darkneſs, inſtead of weakening, do but ſtrengthen his Faith, enliven his Hope, and increaſe the ardour of his Love. He is nothing, he has nothing, he wants nothing, but CHRIST. His Shepherd is his Love; his life is from him; he dies unto himſelf, that he may live wholly to him.

DISCOURSE IV.

The Universal Shepherd.

Isaiah, Chap. xl. Ver. 10, 11.

Preached on the Epiphany.

DISCOURSE IV.

ISAIAH, CHAP. xl. VER. 10, 11.

"BEHOLD, THE LORD GOD WILL
"COME WITH STRONG HAND, AND
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"YOUNG."

THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST to fallen man, whom he hath "redeemed with his own Blood," and whom he continues to feed and ſupport, by unceaſing communications of his own Divine Nature, was the ſubject of the

the preceding diſcourſe; in which I entered upon that part of the text, which expreſſes this Paternal Affection, by a moſt lively and tender ſimilitude: "He "ſhall feed his Flock like a Shepherd." Before I proceed to the remaining part of this beautiful paſſage, I ſhall make one or two obſervations, which this day's feſtival hath ſuggeſted to me, and which may ſerve as further proofs or illuſtrations of what I have already advanced upon the Univerſality of Chriſtian Redemption.

The Epiphany, or manifeſtation of the new-born Saviour to thoſe Eaſtern Magi, who were led by a Divine impulſe, operating through an extraordinary appearance in the heaven, to pay him an early viſit at Bethlehem, and honour him with ſuch external marks of homage and worſhip, as were ſuited to, and expreſſive of his illuſtrious Character and Office; this manifeſtation, I ſay, was an earneſt of that approach-

approaching diſpenſation, under which he was to be proclaimed, felt, and acknowledged to be, what the prophetic Simeon ſtiles him, "A Light to lighten "the Gentiles, and the Glory of his "people Iſrael." It was an earneſt of that Revelation, which was "to make "known the myſtery, which in other "ages was not made known unto "the ſons of men; that the Gentiles "ſhould be fellow-heirs, and of the "ſame body, and partakers of the pro-"miſe in CHRIST;" by which revelation alſo, "the unſearchable Riches of "CHRIST were to be preached among "the Gentiles, and all men made to ſee, "what is the fellowſhip of the myſtery, "which from the beginning of the "world hath been hid in GOD, who "created all things by JESUS CHRIST." This is the language of Scripture, and the plain and obvious meaning of theſe ſeveral texts, can be no other than this:

That

That all mankind had been put into a Capacity of regaining that Eternal Life, which had been loſt by the fall; that this Capacity was the GIFT OF GOD IN CHRIST; that the DIVINE EMANUEL was the Father of a new and ſpiritual offſpring, which by his own influence and operation, ſecret, inviſible, and outwardly unknown, were to be gradually called forth, under a variety of diſpenſations, till at length, in the fullneſs of time, the whole myſtery ſhould be amply unfolded, and Jews and Gentiles ſhould alike be informed and convinced, that they were both created and redeemed by the ſame JESUS; that their capacity of entering into an heavenly life, or the firſt ſeed and principle of that life, was originally imparted to their fallen progenitors, and through them tranſmitted to their whole race; and that every motion of this Divine Principle within them, was as much the effect of the enlightening ray of the GREAT SUN

OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, as the motion of vegetative life in the plant, is the immediate effect of the beams of the elementary ſun.

Wonder not then, my brethren, why this great myſtery was not ſooner revealed, or why the revelation of it hath not been more univerſal. The times and ſeaſons are in the hands of an All-wiſe GOD, who beſt knows, at what time, and in what manner, to reveal himſelf to his creatures. Whilſt, therefore, we ought to think ourſelves highly favoured, in having this Myſtery of Love ſo fully diſplayed to us, let us not uncharitably ſuppoſe, that "GOD hath left "himſelf without a witneſs," in any human heart; but rather let us indulge the ſweet and comfortable reflection, which is warranted by Scripture, that "many ſhall come from the eaſt and "from the weſt, and ſhall ſit down

" with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob,
" in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Having, then, proved that CHRIST's Paſtoral Care extends to the whole of his Flock, and that none can be deſtitute of their proper food and nouriſhment, who will open their hearts to receive it; let us now enquire, what is to be underſtood by his " gathering the Lambs " with his arm, and carrying them in " his boſom."

The peculiar tenderneſs, which he is here ſaid to expreſs towards the Lambs, makes us naturally anxious to know, who thoſe perſons are, that are marked by this deſignation; and a very little attention to the ſimilitude itſelf, will lead us to this knowledge.

Helpleſs, meek, and gentle, is the nature of the Lamb; ſeemingly ſenſible of its own weakneſs, it either keeps cloſe

cloſe to the ſide of its parent, or elſe in plaintive, though inarticulate language, ſolicits the kind protection of the ſhepherd's hand. Quiet and harmleſs itſelf, it ſhrinks from the fiercer and more ſavage nature of its rude companions. It is a ſtranger to wrath and reſentment: it preſerves its meekneſs under the moſt cruel treatment. Even, when led to the ſlaughter, it fawns upon the hand that is ready to ſhed its blood.

Need I tell you, then, that the Lambs mentioned in my text, are all thoſe, who being poſſeſſed of this gentleneſs of nature, and from an inward conſciouſneſs of their own weak and helpleſs ſtate, put themſelves under the Protection of CHRIST, their Spiritual Parent and Shepherd; who, with meekneſs and unwearied patience, ſuſtain every affront and indignity from without, and every rude aſſault of temptation and diſtreſs within; whoſe wills

are ſo intimately united with the Will of GOD, that they can receive, without murmur, yea, with chearful reſignation, the ſtroke that is to deſtroy their earthly life, with all its earthly deſires and affections?

I well know, that the maxims of this world, and the conduct of worldly-men, are diametrically oppoſed to this gentleneſs of nature: with them it paſſes for puſillanimity, or want of ſpirit. Not to reſent an injury, or affront, is beneath the character of what they call a man of honour. But alas! whilſt a man hath ſuch an opinion of his own conſequence, he will never think that he can ſtand in need even of the Protection of his GOD; and the heart that harbours pride, or wrath, or reſentment, muſt be a ſtranger to all thoſe tender, and delicate feelings, which ariſe from a reſignation of the human will to the Divine. Hence it is, that we find ſo many

wayward

wayward ſheep among the Flock of CHRIST, who, reſting upon their own ſtrength and ſufficiency, brook not the gentle Diſcipline which he recommends, nor are content with the wholeſome Food which he adminiſters; but wander in the wilderneſs out of the way, reſtleſs and uneaſy in themſelves, and ever contending and at variance with each other. O thou SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL, arreſt theſe ſilly fugitives in their devious paths, leſt they ſtumble and loſe themſelves in ſome dark and fathomleſs pit, or become a prey to the raging wolves of the deſart! Convince them of the error of their ways, and cauſe them to hear thy Bleſſed Voice, aſſuring them, that "except they be converted, and "become like Lambs, thou canſt not "gather them with thine Arm, or carry "them in thy boſom."

Suited to the mild affections of the ſouls thus characteriſed, is the mild

treatment of the Great Lover of Souls. To "gather them with his Arm, and "carry them in his Boſom," implies, not only protection from all injuries and inſults, but an intimate Union of Hearts, a tender Communication of Love. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly "in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt to your "ſouls:"—reſt and ſecurity from every evil paſſion, from every ſpiritual aſſault within or without. A likeneſs of ſpirit, temper, and diſpoſition, brings us into his arms, and lodges us in his Boſom. A likeneſs of ſpirit, temper, and diſpoſition, makes us One with his Father and Himſelf.

"Behold," ſaid the inſpired Baptiſt, "the Lamb of GOD, that taketh away "the ſin of the world!" Ah! ſinner, deceive not thyſelf, it is the Lamb of GOD that is to take away thy ſins: it is the meek, gentle, and loving ſpirit of CHRIST, turned to and embraced in thine heart, that is to deliver thee from

the

the proud, ſelfiſh, wrathful nature, in which thou art born, and whoſe ſad effects thou canſt not but feel. This is the Atonement, the Satisfaction, the Redemption of CHRIST, even that All-conquering Meekneſs, which muſt finally extinguiſh all that is evil in the whole ſyſtem of things, and leave not one ſingle enemy to GOD and Goodneſs unſubdued.

Many, however, there are, who though very ſenſible of the numberleſs corruptions of nature, and very deſirous of being delivered from them, have not yet reached the ſtate of thoſe, who are here diſtinguiſhed by the name of Lambs; that is, according to the language of Scripture, in whoſe hearts "CHRIST is not yet "formed." But notwithſtanding their weak and imperfect ſtate, they are ſtill the objects of the Shepherd's care; and it is of theſe the Prophet ſpeaks, when he ſays, "he ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with "young."

It is delightful to contemplate the various methods, by which a good and gracious GOD is perpetually ſeeking to reclaim his wandering creatures. Proſperity and adverſity, health and ſickneſs, virtue and vice, good and evil, are all, by his Wiſdom, rendered ſubſervient to this grand and ſalutary purpoſe. The proud ſpirit that can brook no controul, but is lifted up by its own vain imagination, ſo as to admire itſelf as a little deity, frequently bends to the ſtroke of Omnipotence, and is taught Humility in the ſchool of affliction. The covetous, the voluptuous, the angry, envious, and malicious ſpirits, ſome by one diſpenſation, ſome by another, are led to feel the reſtleſs miſery of nature unredeemed, and with earneſtneſs to ſeek for deliverance and peace.

The Good Shepherd waits with the moſt affectionate anxiety for the firſt appearance of this conflict with nature. His

His Wiſdom and Goodneſs manifeſt themſelves by ſuch a gentle treatment of the afflicted ſpirit, as will not obſtruct the ſalutary purpoſe, by too ſudden a removal of the painful ſenſibility on the one hand, or too long a continuance of it on the other. The former might lead to preſumption, the latter to melancholy and deſpair.

Some little flights of Goodneſs, ſome dawnings of the Heavenly Life, may now and then appear in the young and unexperienced Chriſtian: but till the principle is brought forth into a clear manifeſtation, till the temper and diſpoſition are habitually changed, much care and tenderneſs are neceſſary. To emerge at once out of the deep horrors of a dungeon, into the broad blaze of day, would be a ſhock too great for the ſtrongeſt organs of viſion. The Heavenly Beam muſt be gradually introduced; the day muſt break and dawn upon

upon the ſoul, ere the "SUN OF RIGH-"TEOUSNESS can riſe with healing un-"der his wings." The corruptions of nature are permitted to break forth, in order to produce humility; and the ſenſibilities of Divine Peace and Joy are awakened, in order to excite Comfort and Hope. Thus it is, that the Heavenly Shepherd "gently leads thoſe "that are with young," watches over them with unceaſing tenderneſs and care, till his own mild and gentle nature is formed in their hearts, and he can "gather them with his arms, and "carry them in his Boſom."

O let us, then, put ourſelves under the immediate protection of this true "Shepherd and Biſhop of Souls." Let us no longer truſt to the deceitful guidance of unenlightened reaſon, or the more dangerous influence of corrupt paſſion. Our heads and our hearts will conſpire in this caſe to deceive and enſnare

ſnare us. But if we give up ourſelves, our ſouls, and our bodies, into his tender and affectionate hands, we ſhall have the Light of Heaven to illuminate our paths, the Omnipotence of GOD to protect us from all dangers, and the mild and refreſhing influences of the ETERNAL SPIRIT to change and chear our fallen ſpirits, and to "create them "anew, after the Divine Image, in "Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs.

DISCOURSE V.

On the Epistle for the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

St. James, Chap. i. from Ver. 17, to 21.

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St. James, Chap. i. from Ver. 17, to 21.

" Every good gift, and every
" perfect gift, is from above,
" and cometh down from the
" Father of Lights, with whom
" is no variableness, neither
" shadow of turning. Of his
" own will begat he us with
" the Word of Truth, that we
" should be a kind of first
" fruits of his creatures.
" Wherefore, my beloved bre-
" thren, let every man be
" swift to hear, slow to speak,
" slow to wrath: for the
" wrath of man worketh not
" the Righteousness of God.

" Wherefore

"WHEREFORE LAY APART ALL
"FILTHINESS AND SUPERFLUITY
"OF NAUGHTINESS, AND RECEIVE
"WITH MEEKNESS THE ENGRAFT-
"ED WORD, WHICH IS ABLE TO
"SAVE YOUR SOULS."

AMID the many illuſtrious evidences with which we are favoured of the Free Grace and Univerſal Love of GOD, is it not aſtoniſhing, that men ſhould ever entertain ſuch narrow and unworthy conceptions of his Divine Adminiſtration, as to confine it to a few individuals of the human race, and thus to degrade the Maker and Lord of the univerſe to the rank of a mere local and tutelar Deity?

The volume of Nature, the volume of the Goſpel, and the volume of our own

own hearts, if we had but eyes to ſee them, lie equally unfolded to our view. In each of theſe, we may read, in the faireſt and largeſt characters, theſe great and glorious truths: that "the GOD "of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, the "GOD of the Iſraelites, the GOD and "FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, "is the GOD and FATHER of the ſpirits "of all fleſh:" that "he hath made "of one blood all nations under Hea-"ven: that "his tender mercies are "over all his works: that he cauſeth "his ſun to ſhine upon the evil and "upon the good, and ſendeth rain upon "the juſt and upon the unjuſt:" that "he is no reſpecter of perſons; but, "in every nation, he that feareth him, "and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted "of him: that, notwithſtanding the groſs darkneſs which hath prevailed, and ſtill prevails, over a very conſiderable part of the habitable world, "he hath never left "himſelf without witneſs:" that "his

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" light hath always ſhone in the midſt " of this darkneſs," and its life-giving beams have perpetually riſen upon the earth for " the healing of the nations:" " that JESUS CHRIST is the ſame yeſ- " terday, to-day, and for ever:" that as by him GOD originally created man, ſo by him alone man can be redeemed: that " GOD is not willing that " any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould " come to repentance," and receive the fullneſs of redemption from this Univerſal Saviour. Theſe important ſalutary truths are ſummed up in the moſt conciſe and expreſſive terms by the Bleſſed Apoſtle, in the words which I have read to you; the full import of which we ſhall better apprehend, if we attend to the manner in which they are introduced by the preceding verſes.

" Let no man ſay, when he is tempt- " ed, I am tempted of GOD; for GOD " cannot be tempted with evil, neither

" tempteth

" tempteth he any man; but every man
" is tempted, when he is drawn away
" of his own luſts and enticed: then
" when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth
" forth ſin; and ſin, when it is finiſh-
" ed, bringeth forth death. Do not
" err, my beloved brethren, every Good
" Gift, and every Perfect Gift, is from
" above, and cometh down from the
" Father of Lights, with whom is
" no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of
" turning."

Now, without any unnatural force put upon theſe words, is not this their plain and obvious meaning?

Think not, Fellow Chriſtians, that that evil nature which you bring with you into the world, is the nature which GOD originally gave you. It is, in itſelf, earthly and diabolical: it came not from the Source of Immaculate Purity; it ſtands in direct contrariety to

it: its own reſtleſs deſires are its tormenting hunger, and ſin is its food. Selfiſh and ſenſual, it ſeeketh only its own. Death is its true nature; darkneſs its place of abode. Miſtake not the matter, then, I beſeech you. When you feel the workings of this evil nature; when you feel pride, envy, covetouſneſs and wrath; know and be aſſured, that none of theſe can come from GOD: they are all "conceived, and brought "forth, and finiſhed," by the beſtial or diabolical paſſions within you. Nothing but what is good, comes from GOD: every thing that is good and perfect is his gift. Nature is darkneſs and want; GOD alone, is light and fullneſs. He ever was, and is, and will be, the ſame Unchangeable Light, and Life, and Love! Aſcribe, therefore, to nature, the things that belong to nature; but, to GOD, the things that be GOD's. The ſun of this temporary ſyſtem ceaſeth not to ſhine, though the earth daily turns ſome part or other of its ſurface from

his

his beams: the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ceaſeth not to ſhine, though, among the myriads of intelligences that are viſited by his Ray, there ſhould be ſome, who perverſely turn away their eyes and hearts, and chuſe to abide in their own darkneſs. Depend upon it, then, that every good thought, deſire, and inclination, that riſes in your breaſts, every inward oppoſition to evil, every inward hunger after ſomething good, ſomething ſuperior to the groſs gratification of your earthly part, depend upon it, that all this is from GOD—It is not your own—it is a Ray of his ever-ſhining Light, darting into your benighted ſoul: it is "a Good and Perfect Gift" freely given by him, to which you would do well to take heed, and to receive with grateful eagerneſs, that ſo "the "day may begin to dawn, and the Day-"Star to riſe in your hearts."

As a full confirmation of his aſſertion, that evil is from ourſelves, and

that goodneſs is from above, the Apoſtle proceeds in the next verſe, to acquaint us, that, though we are fallen into an earthly and diabolical nature, which every man living muſt know and feel, if he ingenuouſly and ſoberly attends to his own ſenſibilities; yet we have in the center of our hearts, a Seed of Divine Grace, an Offspring of GOD in CHRIST, a Birth of Eternal Life, "ingrafted," as he afterwards expreſſes it, into our ſouls, which is capable of receiving the ſweet influences of the Sun of Righteouſneſs, of opening, ſpringing forth, and coming to full maturity, by the efficacy of his beams.

Think not that I have put words into the Apoſtle's mouth, which he never ſpake. Hear him in his own plain but ſtrong and emphatical language: "Of his Own Will begat he us with the "WORD OF TRUTH, that we ſhould "be

" be a kind of firſt-fruits of his crea-
" tures."

" Begat he us!" Whom does he mean by us? Does he ſpeak of himſelf, and thoſe only to whom he addreſſed his epiſtle? No, my brethren—theſe words relate to you, and me, and all mankind, as much as they did to St. James and his brethren. It would be a very great miſtake to imagine, that all the perſons indiſcriminately, to whom the Apoſtles direct their epiſtles, were truly and ſavingly converted to JESUS CHRIST. Doubtleſs there were many mere outward profeſſors of Chriſtianity then, as there are now: elſe why do we find ſo many apoſtolical cenſures and reproofs in theſe epiſtles? " We, us, ſaints, elect, cal-
" led of GOD," and ſuch like general expreſſions, certainly refer to the whole viſible church; nay, perhaps, in a more enlarged ſenſe, to the whole human race. For there is not one ſingle de-

claration, call, or promiſe in Scripture, but what every man in the world is in ſome meaſure concerned in.

" Of his Own Will begat he us--" ſurely, then, we muſt be his Offspring! and that we are his Redeemed Offſpring, appears from hence, that " he " begat us with the WORD OF TRUTH." What is this " WORD OF TRUTH?" Is it the outward letter of Scripture, as ſome have vainly imagined, and ignorantly aſſerted, making the principal ſeat and ſource of Divine Illumination, and of the Reſidence of the HOLY SPIRIT, to be in the paper and ink of their Bibles? No—" THE WORD " OF TRUTH," ſpoken of in this and other paſſages of Scripture, is the ETERNAL LOGOS, that " WORD, that was " in the beginning; that was with GOD; " that was GOD; by whom all things " were created; even JESUS CHRIST " himſelf the only begotten of the FA-

" THER,

" THER, the Brightneſs of his Glory,
" and the Expreſs Image of his Perſon."

By this WORD, who calls himſelf " the Way, the Truth, and the Life," was man originally created. By this WORD inſpoken into his fallen nature, man was put into a capacity of being redeemed: he was " begotten again of " the will of the FATHER by the WORD " OF TRUTH;" and for this glorious purpoſe, adds the Apoſtle, " that we " ſhould be a kind of firſt-fruits of his " creatures."

The firſt-fruits under the law, were offered up to GOD. They were ſanctified, ſet apart as holy. In like manner, the Heaven-born Nature, Seed or Principle, which is the Gift of GOD through CHRIST, is imparted to us as the means of redeeming and purifying our evil nature, and thus ſanctifying the whole man in body, ſoul, and ſpirit. This

is,

is, therefore, juſtly called the "firſt-"fruits," which being in itſelf holy, is to become an Holy, Heavenly Life and Tincture, whereby the evils introduced by the fall are to be completely removed, and the creature reſtored to its firſt purity and glory.

Having thus pointed out this great and univerſal truth, that man hath within him a Threefold Life, viz. a beſtial, a diabolical, and an heavenly life, known, and to be eaſily diſtinguiſhed by their reſpective ſenſibilities; the two firſt deſiring, hungering, feeding upon nothing but what is evil; the laſt deſiring, hungering, feeding only upon what is good; the former properly our own, into which we entered by the fall, and in which we naturally deſire to continue; the latter, the Free Gift of GOD, proceeding ſolely from him, and fed and nouriſhed by his Grace in CHRIST JESUS;

JESUS; let us now ſee, what kind of Life and Conduct the Apoſtle builds upon theſe ſelf-evident principles.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, "let every man be ſwift to hear, ſlow "to ſpeak, ſlow to wrath."

"Swift to hear"—to hear what?—Why, that WORD OF TRUTH, which he had mentioned in the preceding verſe. But where is this WORD to be heard? Where, but in the temple of our hearts? It is not a "Lo here, or Lo "there!" ſays our BLESSED LORD; "but I ſay unto you, the Kingdom "of GOD is within you!" The ETERNAL WORD delivers his oracles in the inmoſt receſſes of our hearts. It is there alone his voice is heard—whether the means he employs be outward or inward, whether he uſes the inſtrumentality of his miniſters, the diſpenſations of

of his Providences, or the ſecret ſtirrings of the ſinner's conſcience.

Where-ever this Bleſſed Voice is heard, and its dictates implicitly obeyed, whether by Jews, Chriſtians or Pagans, "Barbarians, Scythians, bond or "free," the effects it produces are eſſentially and invariably the ſame. The murdering knife drops harmleſs from the-hand of the relenting ſavage: the angry diſciple of the Meek and Lowly JESUS unbends his rigid brow, and ſuffers the heavenly ſenſations of Benevolence and Love to glow in his breaſt, and illumine his countenance: every boiſterous paſſion of fallen nature is quieted or ſubdued, and gentleneſs and humility reign in ſtill and ſilent triumph over the whole man. He then becomes "ſwift to hear" indeed: wrapt in ſolemn attention, he hearkens with all the eagerneſs of heavenly deſire to what "the LORD GOD ſhall ſay within him

him; and, in conſequence of this, he is "ſlow to ſpeak"—not like ſome weak and half-formed Chriſtians, babbling their little experiences from houſe to houſe, perpetually talking about their religious concerns, and under the appearance of much anxiety for the ſalvation of others, manifeſting a moſt odious ſelfiſhneſs, and phariſaical admiration of their own proficiency.

"Slow to wrath" too, ſays the Apoſtle; juſtifying his admonition by this convincing reaſon: "for the wrath of man "worketh not the Righteouſneſs of "GOD."

O what a glorious precept is here! How neceſſary to be inculcated in all periods of the Chriſtian church! Had this been attended to and obſerved, we ſhould never have heard of the fires of perſecution being kindled to illuminate the ſoul. Men would never have attempted to propagate the mild and lovely religion

religion of JESUS by fierce contention and diſpute. They would never have imagined, that this or that ſyſtem of notions would excite the life and power of religion in the heart; that mere opinion could communicate ſenſibility; or that even the orthodoxy of an Apoſtle could fill the ſoul with the love of his Maſter. Zeal for the Truth is right and commendable: but before we begin to be zealous, let us firſt know, by an inward ſelf-evident experience, what Truth is.

The Truth of all Truths, indiſpenſably neceſſary to human happineſs both here and hereafter, is this: that the evil nature, which we bring with us into the world, muſt be overcome and deſtroyed; and that an heavenly nature, temper and diſpoſition, with heavenly deſires, inclinations, and affections, muſt be formed and produced within us, or we never can "ſee the Kingdom of "GOD."

"GOD." This truth I can ſcarcely think will be called in queſtion, by any ſect or denomination of Chriſtians; nay, I had almoſt ſaid, by any Deiſt, Pagan, or Mahometan. If this great Truth be preached, therefore, and preached from the ſame ſpirit, which the Preacher recommends and endeavours to awaken in his hearers, we ought to wiſh him, GOD ſpeed! whoever he may be, however his notions and opinions may differ from ours, or by whatever names he may think proper to call the Heavenly Life and its operations.

For if we have but this Life within us, powerfully prevailing over all the ſinful workings of our fallen nature, redeeming us from the bondage of corruption, and admitting us into the glorious Light and "Liberty of "the Sons of GOD;" what does it ſignify, by what name we call it, or in what manner we conceive it to enter into us;

us; whether we ſay, it is imputed, imparted, or inherent; whether we aſſert, that it is born with us into the world, or that it is communicated to our ſouls at ſome future period of life? Let us only be ſure, that we have it, and are acting under its influences, and then we need not diſpute about the name.

Is it paying leſs reverence and homage to CHRIST, to declare, that I know and feel, that I have his Righteouſneſs, that is, his Righteous Spirit, temper and diſpoſition, in my heart, than to ſay, I have it by imputation? "CHRIST "is made unto us Wiſdom, and Righ- "teouſneſs, and Sanctification, and Re- "demption." If I have CHRIST in me, I have all theſe: and a man may talk of imputation, or talk of an inherent CHRIST as much as he pleaſes; but he muſt be a ſtranger to all real Communion with his GOD and SA-

VIOUR,

VIOUR, till he partakes of the Same Life, and has "the Same Mind in "him, that was alſo in CHRIST JESUS." Wherever, therefore, I find this "mind," temper and diſpoſition, let it be in an Heathen or a Chriſtian, let his notions and opinions be ever ſo different from mine, I pray GOD, that I may be enabled to revere and love him—and revere and love him I certainly ſhall, if "CHRIST is in me of a Truth."

I conclude, then, with the excellent admonition in the 21ſt verſe, which, after what hath been already ſaid, I need not enlarge upon:

"Wherefore, lay apart all filthineſs "and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs:" that is, turn from all the groſs imaginations, evil deſires, and ſuperabundant pollutions, of your earthly and diabolical nature; "and receive with Meekneſs the "Ingrafted WORD, which is able to

"ſave your ſouls." This Ingrafted WORD, as I have already obſerved, is no other, than "CHRIST in us the "Hope of Glory." Our Salvation depends upon this inward turning to this inward Redeemer, and Meekneſs is the infallible criterion of the ſincerity of our converſion: for it implies a deep ſenſibility of our own nothingneſs, and a total and implicit reſignation of ourſelves, of all that we are, and all that we have, to the POWER OF GOD IN CHRIST.

DISCOURSE VI.

On the Epistle for the Fifth Sunday after Easter.

St. James, Chap. i. from Ver. 22, to the End.

DISCOURSE VI.

St. JAMES, CHAP. i. from VER. 22, to the End.

"BUT BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD,
"AND NOT HEARERS ONLY, DE-
"CEIVING YOUR OWNSELVES. FOR
"IF ANY MAN BE A HEARER OF
"THE WORD, AND NOT A DOER,
"HE IS LIKE UNTO A MAN BE-
"HOLDING HIS NATURAL FACE
"IN A GLASS; FOR HE BEHOLDETH
"HIMSELF, AND GOETH HIS WAY,
"AND STRAIGHTWAY FORGET-
"TETH WHAT MANNER of MAN
"HE WAS. BUT WHOSO LOOKETH
"INTO THE PERFECT LAW OF
"LIBERTY, AND CONTINUETH
"THEREIN, HE BEING NOT A FOR-
"GETFUL HEARER, BUT A DOER
"OF THE WORK, THIS MAN SHALL

" BE BLESSED IN HIS DEED. IF
" ANY MAN AMONG YOU SEEM TO
" BE RELIGIOUS, AND BRIDLETH
" NOT HIS TONGUE, BUT DECEIV-
" ETH HIS OWN HEART, THIS
" MAN'S RELIGION IS VAIN. PURE
" RELIGION, AND UNDEFILED BE-
" FORE GOD AND THE FATHER IS
" THIS, TO VISIT THE FATHER-
" LESS AND WIDOWS IN THEIR
" AFFLICTION, AND TO KEEP HIM-
" SELF UNSPOTTED FROM THE
" WORLD."

IN the concluding verſe of the laſt Sunday's Epiſtle, the Apoſtle, with great propriety, directs us to " receive " with Meekneſs the Ingrafted Word;" becauſe Meekneſs is ſuch a ſenſibility of our own weak and helpleſs condition, as alone can lead us to ſee the neceſſity, and feel the deſire, of " being filled with " all the Fullneſs of GOD."

In

In order to prevent all error and deluſion, and to point out the only method of obtaining a real participation of the bleſſings, which flow from ſuch a reception of the Ingrafted Word, he proceeds, in the verſes now under our conſideration, to enumerate ſome of the moſt diſtinguiſhing marks and characteriſtics of "Pure and Undefiled Religion." Theſe, you will find, conſtitute an unerring ſtandard of Divine Truth, and a never-failing criterion of Chriſtian Faith and Practice.

"Be ye doers of the Word, and not "hearers only, deceiving your own- "ſelves. For if any man be a hearer "of the Word, and not a doer, he is "like unto a man beholding his natu- "ral face in a glaſs; for he beholdeth "himſelf, and goeth his way, and "ſtraightway forgetteth what manner "of man he was."

The precept is noble; the ſimilitude by which it is illuſtrated, juſt and proper. The Word of God is a true and faithful mirrour, which gives us a true and faithful repreſentation of our own perſons. By looking into this, we not only diſcover the innumerable ſpots and blemiſhes, with which we are ſadly deformed; but we have likewiſe a view of the means, by which alone they can be cleanſed and aboliſhed. A tranſient glance, you may well imagine, will not ſuffice: a mere contemplation of the diſeaſe and its remedy, will avail nothing. We muſt not only look, but we muſt act; and whilſt our eyes are opened to the view of our deformities, our hands muſt be ſtretched forth to receive and apply the remedy.

Naturaliſts tell us, that our wiſe and beneficent Creator hath ſo wonderfully adjuſted the whole vegetable ſyſtem, that in whatever ſoil the poiſonous plant

ſprings

ſprings up, its antidote will always be found. Thus, the ſame mirrour that preſents us with a view of the ſpots and blemiſhes of our fallen ſtate, is likewiſe graciouſly appointed to exhibit to us the power and efficacy of that Redeeming Grace, by which we are to be adorned with our primitive beauty and glory. Hear the words of the Apoſtle: "But "whoſo looketh into the Perfect Law of "Liberty, and continueth therein, he "being not a forgetful hearer, but a "doer of the work, this man ſhall be "bleſſed in his deed."

Whenever the Apoſtles ſpeak of a Law, they do not mean a ſet of external precepts committed to writing, merely to be externally obſerved; though this, I believe, is the only idea that people in general have of what is called the moral law: but, when they ſpeak of a Law, they mean a Nature, really and truly living and working in man, conſiſting of a variety

a variety of capacities and ſenſibilities, according to the world, or ſource, or principle, out of which it came. Thus St. Paul tells us, that "the Law of the "Spirit of Life made him free from "the Law of Sin and Death." Surely, we cannot imagine, that the Apoſtle was ſo weak, as to think, that one ſet of outward words, was his deliverer from another ſet of outward words. No—"the Law of the Spirit of Life," and "the Law of Sin and Death," are two Natures, which in the mirrour of Eternal Wiſdom, held up to his mental eye, he plainly ſaw exiſting, and contending in his ſoul. When he declares, therefore, that one law delivered him from another, what is it elſe, but declaring, that the Redeeming Power of the HOLY JESUS, awakening and cheriſhing his own amiable and heavenly nature in his heart, had thereby ſet him free from all the deformity, guilt, and corruption

of

of his earthly nature, which was indeed his death?

"Looking into the Perfect Law of "Liberty, and continuing therein," evidently means a ſtedfaſt perſevering attention and obedience to the ſalutary influences of Divine Grace in our hearts, ſuffering ourſelves to be actuated by, and then acting under them; and thus proceeding from "ſtrength to ſtrength," till our Chriſtian Liberty is perfect, or, in other words, till the living and effectual power of CHRIST hath, as our church ſervice very ſtrongly expreſſes it, "utterly aboliſhed the whole body of "ſin," and admitted us "into the glo-"rious Liberty of the Sons of GOD."

We are, all of us, my brethren, "hearers of the Word." We have been repeatedly told, by voices within and without, what we are by nature, what we may be by Grace. We have been repeatedly

a variety of capacities and ſenſibilities, according to the world, or ſource, or principle, out of which it came. Thus St. Paul tells us, that "the Law of the "Spirit of Life made him free from "the Law of Sin and Death." Surely, we cannot imagine, that the Apoſtle was ſo weak, as to think, that one ſet of outward words, was his deliverer from another ſet of outward words. No—"the Law of the Spirit of Life," and "the Law of Sin and Death," are two Natures, which in the mirrour of Eternal Wiſdom, held up to his mental eye, he plainly ſaw exiſting, and contending in his ſoul. When he declares, therefore, that one law delivered him from another, what is it elſe, but declaring, that the Redeeming Power of the HOLY JESUS, awakening and cheriſhing his own amiable and heavenly nature in his heart, had thereby ſet him free from all the deformity, guilt, and corruption

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We are, all of us, my brethren, "hearers of the Word." We have been repeatedly told, by voices within and without, what we are by nature, what we may be by Grace. We have been repeatedly

repeatedly told, that we all inherit an earthly and corrupt nature from Adam, and an holy heavenly nature from CHRIST; that this latter is implanted in us as a Seed of a New Life, to be called forth into a birth, by the vivifying power of the Sun of Righteouſneſs; that this vivifying power is as univerſal as the light of the ſun of this world; that it ſhines perpetually around us; that our Salvation depends upon our opening our hearts to receive its ſalutary beams; that if we neglect ſo to do, we muſt neceſſarily continue in our natural darkneſs; that the hand of Omnipotence cannot deliver us; that our hell is of our own forming, that its flames are kindled by our own malignant ſpirits, and not by any arbitrary inflictions of Divine Vengeance; that unleſs we apply in time to "the Blood of "Sprinkling," which is given for the healing of ſinners, on this ſide the grave, there "will remain for us no more ſa-

"crifice

" crifice for ſin, but a certain fearful " looking for of judgment and fiery in- " dignation." We may hear ſermons every day in the week; we may weep beneath the pathetic eloquence of the preacher; we may admire the orthodoxy of his doctrine, and the warmth and energy of his addreſs: but unleſs we ſee our own features, in the picture which he draws; unleſs we attend to the ſpots we may diſcover in the mirrour, which he holds up to our view; unleſs we look at them with earneſtneſs and perſeverance, and with the ſame earneſtneſs and perſeverance apply the remedy to remove them; we are but " hearers, and not doers of the Word, " deceiving our ownſelves."

After having given this general precept, which is as a kind of general ſtandard or criterion of " True Religi- " on," the Bleſſed Apoſtle next proceeds to enumerate ſome of the diſtinguiſhing marks,

marks, by which the Life of GOD in the Soul is to be known and felt by ourſelves, and made manifeſt to others.

" If any man among you ſeem to be " religious, and bridleth not his tongue, " but deceiveth his own heart, this " man's religion is vain.

He here gives us, in the firſt place, a kind of negative proof, by which we may know, whether we have " Pure " Religion," or not. Religious impoſtures every day occur; an outward garb is eaſily put on; the zeal and warmth of animal nature is eaſily kept up; and the very ſenſations of Divine Peace and Love, may be imitated and counterfeited by the earthly part of man. Yea, a man may ſadly deceive himſelf: by aſſociating with thoſe who are, or think themſelves, ſpiritually minded, hearing them talk, or talking himſelf of heavenly delights, comfortable frames, inward peace and joy,

joy, his imaginations may ſoon be ſet at work; he may fancy his progreſs in Divine Knowledge to be very great, and even declare, with aſſurance, that his ſins are pardoned, that Heaven is already his portion. Satan often tranſforms himſelf into an Angel of Light, to deceive the unwary in ſome ſuch manner as this. But let us "try the "ſpirits, whether they be of GOD, or "not." The Apoſtle hath furniſhed us with a ſure and infallible touch-ſtone: "If any man ſeem to be religious;" that is, ſeem to himſelf or others, to be ſo, "and bridleth not his tongue, "but deceiveth his own heart, this "man's religion is vain."

Whenever, therefore, O man! thou obſerveſt in thyſelf or others, a diſpoſition to talk and boaſt much of religious experiences, to cenſure and calumniate thy neighbours, to indulge thyſelf in any bitter invectives, any angry

angry or revengeful expreſſions, any ſevere or ſarcaſtical reflections, any high and ſelfiſh declarations of thine own importance, or ſupercilious and contemptuous treatment of others, who may differ from thee in their conception of Divine Things; be thy religious appearances to thyſelf or the world what they may, depend upon it, "thou art "deceiving thine own heart; thy reli-"gion is vain." Though thou mayeſt do all this under the ſhew of a moſt fervent zeal for the cauſe of GOD and truth, yet it will avail thee nothing. Such an unbridled tongue can only ſpeak from an unbridled ſpirit. The moſt righteous cauſe in the world can never ſanctify any unrighteous means: "The "wrath of man worketh not the righte-"ouſneſs of GOD:" and Truth itſelf muſt loſe much of its weight and influence, unleſs it be "ſpoken in Love."

The

The Apoſtle, having thus mentioned one of the negative ſigns of "Pure Reli-"gion," enumerates, in the laſt verſe, ſome of its moſt poſitive and infallible characteriſtics.

"Pure Religion and Undefiled before "God and the FATHER, is this: To "viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their "affliction, and to keep himſelf un-"ſpotted from the world."

There are two texts of Scripture, which are often quoted by unbelievers, and urged alſo againſt the authenticity and even neceſſity of that written Revelation in which they are contained. For my part, ſays one, all my religion is contained in what one of your prophets ſays, viz. "in doing juſtly, loving "mercy, and walking humbly with my "GOD." For my part, ſays another, the Apoſtle St. James has exactly hit upon my notions of religion, viz. that

it conſiſts in "viſiting the fatherleſs "and widows in their affliction, and "keeping ourſelves unſpotted from the "world."

Doubtleſs theſe texts may be ſaid to contain the very ſum and ſubſtance of "Pure Religion." But if theſe purblind Deiſts could but ſee into the depth of thoſe texts, and how much is implied in "doing juſtly, loving mercy, and "walking humbly with GOD; in viſit-"ing the fatherleſs and widows in their "affliction, and keeping themſelves un-"ſpotted from the world;" I cannot but think, they would be ready to make as many new objections to theſe, as to other Scripture Truths: at leaſt, I am ſure, that unregenerate nature in them muſt recoil from their ſpiritual tendency.

When St. James ſpeaks of "viſit-"ing the fatherleſs and widows in "their affliction," he doubtleſs includes, under

under theſe, all the tender offices of ſympathy and love, which we owe to one another as children of one common Father, as the Redeemed Offspring of one common LORD and SAVIOUR. The fatherleſs and widows are named, as being generally the greateſt objects of diſtreſs; but the precept, taken in its true ſpirit, relates to that charitable, benevolent, God-like Temper of Mind, by which thoſe are governed and directed in all their actions, who are intimately united by Faith to the LORD OF LOVE himſelf. True Faith is a meek, humble, ſelf-denying reſignation of the whole man, from a conviction of his own natural inability and corruption, to the Redeeming Power and Love of JESUS CHRIST. From this Divine Union of Faith and Love, Charity, in its largeſt and moſt unlimited ſenſe, is derived; and from hence, in all its fair and beauteous branches, it is perpetually cheriſhed and enlivened.

The

The very eſſence of religion is "the "Love of GOD ſhed abroad in our "hearts," and flowing from thence in rich and copious ſtreams into the afflicted breaſts of the poor, the fatherleſs, and the widow. The omiſſion or neglect of one of the leaſt of theſe duties of Love, is an offence more heinous in the Sight of Heaven, than ten thouſand errors in doctrine. Let us be as orthodox as we can, let us hear as many good ſermons and converſations as poſſible; but for Heaven's ſake, for our ſouls ſake, let us not violate, in the minuteſt inſtance, the Eternal Law of Love. Let us ſacrifice every private ſatisfaction to the obſervance of this law; nor let us think, that our alms-giving, or preaching, or reading, or praying ever ſo fervently, will be the leaſt excuſe for us, at the great day, for tranſgreſſing, or even neglecting, one of the moſt common precepts of Love.

The laſt characteriſtic of "Pure and "Undefiled Religion" here mentioned, is "to keep ourſelves unſpotted from "the world."

This is, indeed, a very comprehenſive expreſſion; but not more ſo, than the nature of the Divine Life in the ſoul requires it to be. A worldly ſpirit includes in it every thing that can poſſibly ſeparate the ſoul from GOD. To be "unſpotted from the world," is to be totally diſengaged from the dominion of this ſpirit, and to be totally under the guidance of another ſpirit from another world. We may talk of "the man "of ſin," being confined to the Romiſh church, and make the Pope in his infallible chair to be the "ſcarlet whore," and modern Rome the Babylon of Chriſtendom: but believe me, my brethren, whilſt we are under the dominion of a worldly ſpirit, we have the "man of ſin, Babylon, and the ſcarlet

" whore," in our own hearts; and all the judgments threatened in Scripture againſt theſe characters, will ſurely light upon our heads, unleſs we " keep our-" ſelves unſpotted from the world."

Well, but ſome will ſay, " to keep " ourſelves unſpotted from the world," implies a ſtate of perfection. What if it ſhould? Perfect we muſt certainly be, or we cannot ſee the Kingdom of GOD. The Apoſtle means not, that we are to be free from the various temptations of the world; he means not, that evil ſhall ceaſe to dwell in our outward and natural man, or ceaſe to vex us with its ſtratagems and allurements: no, ſuch conflicts we muſt expect to bear, to the very end of our pilgrimage; and to bear them is our triumph. To be " un-" ſpotted from the world," means no more, than that the world muſt not have dominion over us; its temptations muſt be reſiſted, its deceitful wiles muſt be guarded

guarded againſt. This very ſtate of temptation reſiſted, is our Chriſtian Perfection here: it was the Perfection of our BLESSED MASTER himſelf. Let us remember, that "as he was tempted "like unto us," he knows how to ſuccour, and will ſuccour us under temptation. We have his Strength to enable us to contend with, and overcome all our adverſaries; and his comfortable promiſe to encourage us to perſevere to the end, in the glorious conflict: "Lo, "I am with you always, even unto the "end of the world!" Amen.

DISCOURSE VII.

THE CHARACTERS OF THE REGENERATE AND UNREGENERATE STATES.

PSALM civ. VER. 29, 30.

DISCOURSE VII.

PSALM civ. VER. 29, 30.

"THOU HIDEST THY FACE, THEY
"ARE TROUBLED: THOU TAKEST
"AWAY THEIR BREATH, THEY
"DIE, AND RETURN TO THEIR
"DUST. THOU SENDEST FORTH
"THY SPIRIT, THEY ARE CREA-
"TED; AND THOU RENEWEST THE
"FACE OF THE EARTH."

THIS Pſalm is a moſt devout and exalted meditation upon the nature and attributes of GOD, as they are illuſtriouſly diſplayed in his works of Creation, Providence, and Redemption. All the peculiar excellencies of the ſeveral ſpecies of eloquence, the deſcriptive, the ſublime, and the pathetic, are happily exhibited in this finiſhed compoſition.

It

It opens with a ſolemn recognition of the Power and Majeſty of GOD, which at once ſets forth the wiſdom and piety of its author: "Bleſs the LORD, O my "ſoul! O LORD my GOD, thou art ex- "ceeding glorious; thou art clothed "with majeſty and honour!" The no- bleſt objects of the material univerſe are then ſelected to form a deſcription of this Majeſty: "Who covereſt thyſelf "with Light, as with a garment; who "ſtretcheſt out the heavens like a cur- "tain; who layeth the beams of his "chambers in the waters; who mak- "eth the clouds his chariot, who "walketh upon the wings of the "wind." He then proceeds to enumerate the wonders of creating power, through- out the vaſt ſcale of being, from the higheſt order of intellectual life, to the loweſt part or portion of ina- nimate matter. He repreſents all theſe as originally proceeding from the inviſible Source of Being, and perpe- tually

tually depending upon the ſame Source for the ſupport and continuation of their exiſtence.

From the whole tenor of the Pſalm, and particularly from the two verſes I have ſelected for my text, we learn this great and inſtructive leſſon: that the life-giving, life-preſerving Preſence and Energy of the CREATOR, is as neceſſary to the vegetation of the ſmalleſt blade of graſs, as to the intellectual growth of the higheſt Archangel; that was this Energy with-held a ſingle moment, the faireſt flower, in the material, as well as ſpiritual world, would wither and die; that the Spirit of the Higheſt pervades, ſuſtains, and actuates the whole ſyſtem of being; that if any of his creatures, who were originally living Images of Himſelf, formed with his own eſſential freedom of will, ſhould abuſe this liberty, and thereby loſe his Divine Image, and forfeit that ſtate of bliſs in which he created

created them, it is his Spirit alone that can reſtore them; that the ſame Breath of Life, with which they were firſt animated, muſt be rekindled, the ſame power that created muſt renew their degenerate natures. "Thou hideſt thy "face, they are troubled: thou takeſt "away their breath, they die, and re-"turn to their duſt: thou ſendeſt forth "thy Spirit, they are created; and thou "reneweſt the face of the earth!"

Though theſe words may appear to be more immediately applicable to the preſent ſtate of the natural world; yet, if we attend to the ſcope and deſign of the illuminated author, we ſhall find them, as I have already obſerved of the whole Pſalm, beautifully expreſſive of the Divine Agency in the ſpiritual world. I ſhall, therefore, conſider them as a lively repreſentation of the death and revival of our ſpiritual nature, manifeſted in our fall in Adam, and our Redemption

in

in JESUS CHRIST. And as this truth will be beſt illuſtrated by an exemplification of the two oppoſite ſtates of nature and grace, I ſhall attempt to draw the character of man, firſt, in his unregenerate, and ſecondly, in his regenerate ſtate. In order to this, I beg leave to premiſe, that, by the unregenerate, I mean all thoſe, who live and act under the influence of that evil nature, which they inherit from Adam; and by the regenerate, thoſe of every age and nation, of every religion, ſect or opinion, who have ſought and found a better nature, derived to them from the "Second "Adam, the LORD from Heaven," by virtue of which, they are enabled to relinquiſh and ſubdue all the attractions, temptations, and powerful ſuggeſtions of their fallen life. From the firſt of theſe, as my text expreſſes it, GOD may be ſaid to "hide his face," in conſequence of which, "they are troubled, they "die, and return to their duſt." To the

the laſt, "he ſendeth forth his Spirit, "by which they are created anew;" and through them the "face of the earth "is renewed."

I. A very little acquaintance with mankind is ſufficient to inform us of the falſe happineſs and real miſery of thoſe, who live "without hope, and "without GOD in the world;" that is to ſay, without the ſweet hope of an higher and better life than this, and without that Participation of the Divine Nature, which alone can exalt them to ſuch a life. Fading and deluſive joys, permanent and ſubſtantial woes, are the ſad but ſure ingredients of the ſinner's life. He dwells in the depth of darkneſs, and can have no true light, becauſe GOD "hideth his Face from him." "The Light of GOD's countenance," is the only true light in the univerſe; the light in which the ſinner lives, is a falſe glare, that injures rather than aſſiſts his

his ſight, and clothes the objects around him with deceitful colours.

"He is troubled" too. Object after object, pleaſure after pleaſure, ſolicit his fond purſuit: ſatiety and diſguſt, vexation and diſappointment are ſure to ſucceed. Every earthly joy, of proſpect never ſo fair, withers in the bud; and the cup of pleaſure, in the very draught, is changed into a cup of bitterneſs.

But he is not only "troubled" in this life, but "he muſt die, and turn "again to his duſt." Theſe expreſſions may be conſidered in a two-fold ſenſe, viz. as relating not only to the temporal, but to the ſpiritual, death of the unregenerate. With reſpect to the former, the diſſolution of his animal nature puts an end to thoſe earthly joys, in which alone his deſires and delight were placed. The lifeleſs maſs is committed to its kindred duſt, and the grave

cloſes the ſcene of worldly vanity. But the immortal ſpirit, which no death will ever be able to extinguiſh, now removed from its temporary manſion of earth, and ſeparated from the tranſient influences of the ſun and air of this world, falls into the firſt forms of its nature, and being unacquainted with the Light and Love of GOD, mingles with its congenial element of darkneſs and fiery wrath. Thus he dies to a bad nature, and lives again to a worſe: he exchanges the life of a beaſt, for that of a devil; and a mixed ſtate of good and evil, for a ſtate of unmingled wretchedneſs and woe.

The word, death, however, is of a far more extenſive ſignification. It does not merely denote the ſeparation of the ſoul from this outward body; neither can it be the total extinction of being, but only a change of the mode or ſtate of being. Thus the ſinner, as I have already obſerved, dies to one ſtate, and lives to another.

ther. His temporal death does not, indeed, commence at the diſſolution of his body; for the moment he is born, as the Scripture and experience teach us, he begins to die. The ſeeds of this temporal death are implanted in his earthly part; and,

" The young diſeaſe, that muſt ſubdue
" at length,"
" Grows with his growth, and ſtrengthens with his ſtrength."

This is an event, which no human foreſight, no human power can poſſibly ward off. It is, indiſcriminately, the inevitable lot of " the good and the evil, " of the juſt and the unjuſt.".

But the ſpiritual death of the ſinner, by which he dies to an higher life, and returns to his duſt, that is, to the inferior life of his earthly nature, may, and ought to be avoided, inaſmuch as he car-

ries in his own breaſt a capacity of obtaining that higher life, and a power to avail himſelf of it, whenever he chuſes to turn for aſſiſtance to its Divine Author. For though GOD is ſaid to "hide his face, and withdraw his "breath," yet the effect is here put for the cauſe, a mode of expreſſion frequently uſed in Scripture, and by the ſublimeſt writers.

Thus the ſun may be ſaid to hide his face from the blind-man's eye; but the true cauſe of his want of light, is a defect in the organs of viſion. Could the blind man, by any exertions of his own, or co-operation with the aſſiſtance of others, by applying to a ſkilful oculiſt, and implicitly ſubmitting to his counſel and operations, recover the uſe of theſe organs, and yet refuſe to avail himſelf of ſuch means of recovery, the ſun would ſtill continue to hide his face from him; but the cauſe would not be in the ſun,

ſun, but in the obſtinacy of his own will. In like manner, to a perſon labouring under a grievous aſthma, it ſeems as if the air had withdrawn its vital influence, and would no more breathe into his panting frame; whereas, in truth, the cauſe is in his own diſordered breaſt. Has he a remedy in his power, and refuſes to make uſe of it? he muſt continue under the painful effects of the diſeaſe, and be a ſtranger to the ſweetneſs and chearfulneſs of the air, though its influence is all around him, and nothing is wanting but his own will to enjoy it.

Thus it is with the CREATOR, and all his intelligent and free creatures. His Light ſhines perpetually around them; his ſpirit, like the air, ſheds its ſalutary influence throughout the univerſe of being. Every creature that is capable of ſeeing this Light, and breathing this Air of Heaven, may enjoy them

if he will. Man, by original apoſtaſy, was indeed rendered abſolutely incapable of this; but, through the Redemption in CHRIST, the capacity is reſtored. He who is "the Light, that lighteth every "man, that cometh into the world," hath freely given to every man a power of ſeeing and rejoicing in this Light: in conſequence of which, there is no ſinner, but feels, at times, ſome reproofs of conſcience, or ſome good and virtuous thoughts and deſires riſing in his ſoul. Now what are theſe reproofs of conſcience, but the Light of CHRIST ſhining into him, and diſcovering the evil and darkneſs of his fallen nature? Whence can theſe good thoughts and deſires proceed, but from him, who alone is good, and "from whom alone every good and "perfect gift cometh?" So that the "hiding of GOD's Face," and "with-"drawing his Breath," is not of GOD, but of the ſinner himſelf, who voluntarily

rily and obſtinately turns his eyes and heart from the Source of Life and Love.

Thus, for want of the Light and Air of Heaven, theſe immortal ſpirits "die, "and turn to their duſt." A worldly life, with all its pride, emptineſs, folly, and evil, becomes their life, and the ſin that deſtroys their ſoul, "the "wages of which is this ſpiritual death," is no other than the preferring an animal and diabolical Life, to one that is Angelical and Divine.

Strange! that men, who boaſt of Reaſon, as the Godlike Faculty that diſtinguiſhes them from the brute creation, ſhould form ſo falſe a judgment, and purſue ſuch an erroneous conduct! And yet, who are they that moſt eagerly go forth in queſt of forbidden pleaſures? Are they not thoſe, who, with

hearts and bodies devoted to the ſervice of the baſeſt paſſions that can diſgrace human nature, will dare to lecture you upon the excellency of human reaſon, and extol the faint glimmerings of this feeble taper above the meridian blaze of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS? Is there not a ſeeming inconſiſtency in their principles and conduct? No, no—Let us unfold the tale, and our wonder will ceaſe.

Theſe advocates of human reaſon can take their little taper in their hands, and make it ſubſervient to every baſe and unworthy purpoſe. If they are men of pleaſure, it will light them to midnight revels, and the darkeſt ſcenes of lewdneſs and debauchery. They can employ it in ſearch of ſpecious arguments on the ſide of vice, and with the moſt daring effrontery, flaunt them in the face of Virtue.

If

If they are men of buſineſs, earneſtly bent upon the acquiſition of worldly wealth, this ſame taper of reaſon will ſtand them in good ſtead. The Light of Revelation is too ſtrong! "Having food "and raiment, to be therewith con- "tent," is a maxim they cannot away with. This taper will light them into a thouſand little receſſes, which, without its aſſiſtance, they could not penetrate. It will enable them to comprehend and practice every low diſhoneſt act, which groveling avarice ſtoops to make uſe of in vending its own, or bargaining for the goods of others. It will demonſtrate to them, that poverty is the greateſt curſe; and wealth the very perfection of human happineſs: or at leaſt, it will enlarge upon the expediency of providing for their families, the indiſpenſable duty of leaving an handſome fortune to each of their children, and, under the appearance of perfect diſintereſtedneſs

with

with reſpect to themſelves, will make them drudge on in the ſervice of ſin, to ſecure riches and honours to their poſterity.

If they are men of ambition, their little taper will light them to every avenue that leads to the temple of falſe honour. It will demonſtrate to them the propriety and neceſſity of riſing as faſt as they can to the pinnacle of preferment, on the pretence of being thereby more extenſively uſeful, and by their intereſt and influence, ſerving thoſe who may ſtand in need of their aſſiſtance.

Thus, whatever the boaſting advocates of unenlightened reaſon may aſſert, it is evident from daily experience and obſervation, that reaſon unrenewed, is but the ſlave of the human will; and that whatever ſchemes the will may propoſe, reaſon is ready to enliſt in her ſervice, and

and to inveſtigate the ſpeedieſt, ſureſt methods of carrying them into execution.

Nay, what is it, that reaſon, unhallowed by Divine Grace, will not do? What, indeed, has ſhe not done? Hath ſhe not, in innumerable inſtances, pleaded the cauſe of vice, ſpeciouſly defended the characters of the voluptuary, the ambitious, and the miſer, and pointed out to them the paths that would moſt ſurely lead them to the objects of their unlawful deſires? Hath ſhe not, in innumerable inſtances, arraigned the Juſtice and Goodneſs of the MOST HIGH? Nay, hath ſhe not frequently enliſted under the banners of Atheiſm, and with falſe wit and ſophiſtical argument, called in queſtion the very Being of GOD?

And is this the idol, to which our modern unbelievers bow the knee? Is this the inſtructor, which they would fain

fain ſubſtitute in the room of that Divine Light and Holy Inſpiration, which the GOD OF TRUTH, by his own SON and BLESSED SPIRIT, hath freely offered for our guide? This is, indeed, to hold a candle to the ſun: or rather, to prefer a dungeon, a dark cavern of the earth, with its horrors lighted by a glimmering lamp, to the fair face of nature, diſplaying all its beauties to the noon-tide beam. Reaſon, indeed, like the other faculties of our nature, when ſanctified by Grace, becomes ſubſervient to the nobleſt purpoſes, and when illuminated from above, may be profitably exerciſed upon ſpiritual objects. It is then in the ſervice of the ſpiritual man, and like himſelf it becomes ſpiritual. Our internal ſenſes muſt firſt be opened, to view the objects of another world, before we can employ our reaſon about them. Till this is done, we are in a ſtate of Spiritual Death,

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in bondage to the devil, the world, and our own evil luſts.

Such is that ſtate of unregenerate nature, in which we are all born of the firſt Adam. "The Face of GOD "is hidden from us, and we are trou- "bled: his Breath is taken away; we "die, and return to our duſt."

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE CHARACTERS OF THE REGENERATE AND UNREGENERATE STATES.

PSALM civ. VER. 29, 30.

DISCOURSE VIII.

PSALM civ. VER. 29, 30.

"THOU HIDEST THY FACE, THEY
"ARE TROUBLED: THOU TAKEST
"AWAY THEIR BREATH; THEY
"DIE, AND RETURN TO THEIR
"DUST. THOU SENDEST FORTH
"THY SPIRIT, THEY ARE CRE-
"ATED; AND THOU RENEWEST
"THE FACE OF THE EARTH!"

IN the preceding diſcourſe I obſerved, that though this paſſage of Scripture might ſeem to relate ſolely to the preſent ſtate of the natural world; yet, in a more enlarged and ſpiritual ſenſe, and without any improper force put

upon it, it may likewiſe be underſtood to have reſpect to the intellectual ſyſtem, and in this ſenſe exhibit a lively and expreſſive repreſentation of the Two States of human nature, viz. its Fall in Adam, and its Redemption in JESUS CHRIST. The firſt of theſe ſtates, moſt plainly delineated in the former part of my text, I have already conſidered; and endeavoured to ſhew, by arguments drawn from common obſervation and daily experience, that, in the ſtate of unregenerate nature, GOD may with truth be ſaid to "hide his face" from us, in conſequence of which "we are "troubled;" and to "take away his "breath," in conſequence of which we "die, and return to the duſt" of our earthly nature. I ſhall now proceed to enumerate the true and real characteriſtics of the Regenerate Nature, to which the latter verſe of my text alludes: "Thou "ſendeſt forth thy Spirit, they are cre-

"ated;

" ated; and thou reneweſt the face of " the earth!"

I have already ſaid, that, by the Regenerate, we are to underſtand all thoſe of every age and nation, of every religious ſect and opinion, who, by Divine Grace, have ſought and found an higher and better life than their preſent earthly and fallen one; in conſequence of which " they are created anew," as my text expreſſes it; that is to ſay: by the breathing forth again of that Breath of Life, by which man was orginally formed in the Divine Image, this Image is happily reſtored; he riſes out of the ruins of a fallen, into the Glories of a redeemed, ſtate; and is thereby enabled to relinquiſh or ſubdue all the attractions and temptations, all the powerful influences and ſuggeſtions of his earthly and inferior part.

From this ſhort deſcription, it is ſufficiently evident, that the Regenerate Nature, in its inward tempers, diſpoſitions, and affections, as well as its outward appearance in the conduct of human life, is directly oppoſed to that which is unregenerate. One is from beneath, the other from above: one is of the earth, earthly; the other is of Heaven, heavenly: one is born of this world, of the will of the fleſh; the other is born of GOD, of the will of his own Eternal Spirit: one is death, ſpiritual as well as temporal; the other is Life, heavenly and eternal. The contraſt is obvious and ſtrong. And as we have already taken a view of the dark ſide, and contemplated nature in its fallen and degraded ſtate; let us now change the ſcene, and behold the luminous and reviving proſpect of nature redeemed, ſpiritualized, and exalted.

Not

Not half ſo beautiful, ſweet, and refreſhing, are the beams of opening morn, which diſſipate the ſhades of night; as thoſe rays of Uncreated Light, which diſpel all doubts and darkneſs from the Regenerate Heart. In the picture of unrenewed nature, all was ſhadowy and deceitful: the Light, if any there was, was a falſe glare; the objects, either viſionary or deſtructive. In the picture now before us, all is real Light, Life, and Bliſs: every object is ſeen in its true colours and proportions. Unclouded ſkies, mild and gentle breezes, fair and beauteous landſcapes, are without—within, ſweet peace of mind, deſires calm and unruffled, love, harmony, and Seraphic joy!

Follow the truly Regenerate Chriſtian through all the periods and poſſible conditions of human life, you will find this repreſentation to be ſtrictly juſt. As to thoſe ſtorms of temptation, adverſity,

and affliction, in which the Prince of Darkneſs is ſometimes permitted to thunder around him, theſe can only affect that outward nature, by which he ſtands connected with this outward world. The Inward Man riſes ſuperior to this elemental uproar, lives and breathes in the Light and Air of Heaven, and is perpetually converſant and entertained with heavenly objects and delights.

True, indeed, it is, that this moſt deſirable ſerenity is not to be attained at once. The ſtruggle betwixt two oppoſite natures muſt be long continued, before the victory is complete. "The "face of the earth," after a cold and dreary winter, is not inſtantaneouſly "renewed:" the genial warmth of the ſun kindles, by degrees, the vegetative life; and days, and weeks, and months, muſt paſs, before the plants, and herbs, and flowers, and fruits, arrive at their maturity, and diffuſe their beauties, virtues,

and

and fragrance, for the pleaſure or nouriſhment of man.

Thus it is with reſpect to the growth of our Regenerate Nature. "The Seed "of the Incorruptible Word" lies buried in the earthly heart, till GOD "ſends "forth his Spirit," by which we are "created;" that is, by which this Seed is called forth out of its hidden ſtate, into a birth or manifeſtation. The fruits of this Regeneration are the only marks by which it can be diſtinguiſhed from the unregenerate ſtate: where they do not appear, charity itſelf will permit us to think, that "he who "liveth" in ſuch a ſtate, "is dead "whilſt he liveth."

As the nature of this New Life, therefore, is beſt known by its fruits or effects, I will attempt to draw the outlines of the Character of a Chriſtian, acting through life under the immediate In-

fluence and Inſpiration of that Spirit, by the ſending forth of which he hath been "created," and "the face of his "earthly part renewed."

One of the firſt realities which the Light of Heaven diſcovers to his wondering mind, is this: that true religion is not a name, a form, or an opinion, but a Life actuating its proper ſpirit, and its proper body; that is, conſiſting of internal powers and principles, and an external conduct conformable to them: theſe will generally appear to go hand in hand. But ſhould the outward man, in ſome inſtances, when viewed with a worldly eye, ſeem to act inconſiſtent with the internal principles of Truth, we muſt nevertheleſs be very cautious in forming our judgment in ſuch caſes. For the principle within is often good and right, when, from ſome ſtrange concurrence of outward circumſtances, ſuch

as

as education, prejudice, national cuſtoms and obſervances, there ſeems to be a deviation from that principle. The Regenerate Chriſtian, ſenſible of this, and living, as he does, in the element of Love, has too liberal and extenſive views of the ſecret and ſalutary influences of the DIVINE SPIRIT, to think of confining them within the ſcanty limits of any particular religious ſect or ſects in the world. He believes, that they may be frequently found as operative and effectual amid the noiſe and hurry of ſecular life, as within the narrow precincts of a monaſtery, or the narrower cell of the ſolitary anchorite.

Wherever the fruits of "Love, Joy, "Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, "Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Tempe-"rance," are viſible, there undoubtedly the SPIRIT OF GOD hath been ſent, the "face of the earth hath been re-"newed."

" newed." The truly Regenerate hath, therefore, a religious contempt for all thoſe littleneſſes, which are ſo often ſeen among nominal profeſſors of the Goſpel. He cannot think, that thoſe perſons have made any great proficiency in Chriſtian Knowledge or Chriſtian Practice, who dare to call their neighbours goodneſs in queſtion, if they ſhould happen to differ in ſome particular notions of Truth from themſelves. Theſe external minutiæ may ſerve as fuel to the falſe zeal of pharaſaical profeſſors, but are beneath the notice of the Heaven-born Chriſtian. He knows that, " to " the Pure, all things are pure:" and as, on the one hand, he is careful to avoid every thing that looks like a licentious abuſe of this maxim; ſo, on other, he would not abridge his Chriſtian Liberty by any formal and needleſs auſterities. In a word, his grand concern is, to live above the world, and

and to regard its praiſes as little as its cenſures: he is, therefore, in no wiſe anxious to be thought a ſpiritual man, but to be ſo in reality.

O Sinner! couldſt thou have the leaſt idea of thoſe ſublime joys, which the Regenerate experience; that delightful Intercourſe with Heaven, which is opened to them in prayer; that ineffable Viſion of celeſtial objects, that breaks in upon the contemplative eye of Faith; that Glance from the ſource of Uncreated Light, that Taſte of Angels Food, that Touch of Love—in a word, that high and refined entertainment of every ſpiritual ſenſe and faculty, which they enjoy in their retired moments; couldſt thou, I ſay, O ſinner! have the leaſt idea of ſuch delights as theſe, ſhame and confuſion would cover thy face, on a retroſpect of thoſe falſe and unprofitable pleaſures, to which thou haſt hitherto ſurrendered thine heart. Thou

wouldſt

wouldſt be convinced, that thou haſt been "ſpending thy money for that "which is not bread, and thy labour "for that which ſatisfieth not."

This ineffable ſweetneſs, which the Chriſtian enjoys in the hour of calmneſs and abſtraction, leaves ſuch a tincture upon his ſoul, as diffuſes itſelf throughout all his actions. The Image of God renewed in his breaſt, ſhines forth in his whole manners and deportment. Meekneſs, Humility, and Love, the ſureſt characteriſtics of this Image, breathe, ſpeak, and act, in every thing he ſays or does; and demonſtrate his religion to be, not merely in his head, but in his heart and life. It would be needleſs to enumerate the ſeveral duties, in the practice of which he is faithfully engaged. Beſides, outward morality is known to moſt men, and few are ſo ignorant as to be unacquainted with the common precepts of religion: but the

power

power of obſerving theſe precepts is known and felt by him alone, who hath been "created" anew by the SPIRIT OF GOD. It is the Regenerate alone, who "can do all things, through CHRIST "ſtrengthening him."

To GOD his heart is perpetually turned in prayer, deſiring to know no happineſs but in him, and to deem every thing good, that comes from him. In churches, in forms, in ordinances, he regularly and decently offers up the tribute of homage due to his CREATOR, REDEEMER, and SANCTIFIER. Out of churches, out of forms, out of ordinances, he ceaſeth not to have the ſame communion with the Adorable TRINITY. His body is the Living Temple of the HOLY SPIRIT; and his renewed heart the flaming altar, upon which the ſacrifice of himſelf, and all that he hath, is offered up to his Maker.

To

To his neighbours and brethren, the ſame principle of Divine Light and Life manifeſts itſelf in all the amiable graces of Meekneſs, Condeſcenſion and Charity. Cautious of giving offence himſelf, and ever ready to forgive others, he becomes a ſtranger to wrath and reſentment: reſigned and contented with the condition of life, in which Providence hath placed him, he feels neither jealouſy nor envy, neither avarice nor ambition.

With reſpect to his own perſon, by temperance and chaſtity, he is careful to preſerve, unſpotted by ſin, that outward Tabernacle, which is dignified by the Reſidence of FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT. Their communion he is anxious to enjoy; their Inſpiration he conſiders as the only ſource of his Spiritual Life; and, therefore, endeavours to bring all the powers and faculties

ties of his nature in ſubjection to their Illuminating Influence.

Even reaſon, which, in his unregenerate ſtate, was but the blind ſlave of his earthly will, becomes now the amiable and enlightened hand-maid of the Divine Will. That, which was but a little glimmering taper, perverted to the moſt odious uſes in the hands of the natural man, when touched by a Beam from the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, is kindled into a glorious but ſubordinate luminary, and in the hands of the ſpiritual man becomes ſubſervient to the beſt and nobleſt purpoſes

Nor think, that I have been decrying reaſon, more than any of the other faculties of fallen nature. For, ſurely, if we believe, that all its faculties are in a fallen ſtate, we cannot exclude reaſon from the number. Doubtleſs her

powers,

powers, with reſpect to outward things, are great: ſhe can readily and aptly contemplate the world of nature around us; and, without much difficulty, comprehend all the wonderful diſcoveries that have been made in natural philoſophy. Hitherto ſhe "can go—but no "further:" the phænomena of the material univerſe, and the laws by which they are governed, are the only objects within the narrow limits of her unenlightened eye: the Heavenly World, and its objects, require a greater luſtre to manifeſt them, and a keener ſight to perceive them. This ſuperior luſtre, this ſharper viſion, the Regenerate alone enjoys: he can, therefore, uſefully employ his illuminated reaſon, which is now a part of his ſpiritual man, upon ſpiritual objects; and this reaſon will then be found happily to coincide with his will and affections.

Hence

Hence it appears, that by "GOD's "ſending forth his Spirit," every part of the fallen ſyſtem is repaired, and the Divine Image reſtored to man. He is again "created;" and "the face of the "earth is renewed."

I conclude with one important obſervation, which, I ſhould think, muſt prompt every man to wiſh, that he may partake of this great and glorious change. The converſion of every individual is an earneſt, or firſt-fruits, of that laſt and moſt ſublime Renovation, when, if my text may be prophetically taken, "the "whole face of the earth ſhall be re-"newed" by the ſame ETERNAL TRINITY that originally created it; when the Paradiſiacal State ſhall become univerſal; when the whole Syſtem of Divided Properties, and Diſordered Elements, ſhall be brought into Perfect Harmony; and when no voice ſhall be heard, through the boundleſs realms

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of being, but the VOICE OF LOVE— under whoſe meek, but powerful influences, all the kingdoms of the earth ſhall become the Kingdoms of the LORD and of his CHRIST.

May GOD of his Infinite Mercy haſten this glorious period, and gather us all into his one only true Catholic Church of LOVE, for the ſake, and through the Merits of the Son of his LOVE, CHRIST JESUS our Saviour! Amen.

DISCOURSE IX.

HOPE IN GOD, THE ONLY REFUGE IN DISTRESS.

PSALM xlii. VER. 11.

DISCOURSE IX.

PSALM xlii. VER. 11.

"WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O
"MY SOUL? AND WHY ART THOU
"DISQUIETED WITHIN ME? HOPE
"THOU IN GOD, FOR I SHALL
"YET PRAISE HIM, WHO IS THE
"HEALTH OF MY COUNTENANCE
"AND MY GOD."

IT is a very miſtaken notion, which ſome perſons are fond of entertaining, that the Life of a Chriſtian is one continued ſcene of tranquillity, chearfulneſs and joy; that the path to Heaven is ſtrewed with roſes; that there is no-

thing thorny or uneven to annoy the Pilgrim's feet, no ſtorms or tempeſts to retard his progreſs, no difficulties or dangers to encounter on the way. Such ſentiments as theſe, have a very pernicious influence on the practice of mankind. Prone to indolence in ſpiritual things, and averſe to religious exerciſes of every kind, they are apt to catch at the pleaſing deluſion, and are willing to think, that the victory is obtained, before they have even armed themſelves for the combat.

The truth is this: Ever ſince the unhappy fall of our firſt parents, good and evil are ſo mixed and interwoven in the preſent checquered and imperfect ſtate of things, that we can neither obtain the former, nor avoid the latter, without inexpreſſible labour, pain, and anxiety. The diſorders introduced by ſin into the moral world, have darkened and corrupted the natural; ſo that, in either ſyſtem,

it

it requires more than human ſtrength to ſeparate the evil from the good, and thereby to obtain temporal or ſpiritual felicity.

By the glorious ſcheme of Redemption, indeed, the good Providence of GOD has over-ruled theſe diſorders and irregularities in ſuch a manner, as to render them beautifully ſubſervient to the ſupreme happineſs of his moral creatures. Storms and tempeſts, pain and labour, are become neceſſary for the health and preſervation of the natural world: ſorrows and anxieties, diſtreſſes, and afflictions, inward ſtruggles and pangs, are alike expedient for the purity and perfection of the moral.

GOD, therefore, who, at one intuitive glance, beholds all the relations and connexions of things, like a wiſe and provident Father, affectionately anxious for the welfare of his children, makes

makes uſe of all theſe natural means, in various meaſures and degrees, according to the particular ſituation and circumſtances of men, to reſtore to them that primitive felicity which had been loſt by ſin. Or, to expreſs myſelf in plain ſcriptural language—" It is through " much tribulation we enter into glory: " we muſt mourn, before we can be " comforted:—If we would be CHRIST's " diſciples, we muſt deny ourſelves, and " take up our croſs and follow him:— " The world muſt be crucified unto us, " and we unto the world:—If we would " receive an eternal weight of glory, we " muſt have our ſhare of thoſe light " afflictions, which are but for a mo- " ment:—If we would taſte the peace- " able fruits of righteouſneſs, we muſt " be exerciſed by thoſe chaſtenings, which " for the preſent are not joyous, but " grievous."

But

But if ſuch be the Chriſtian's State, ſuch the difficulties, dangers, and diſtreſſes that attend it, ſurely, he can have little joy or comfort in his progreſs.—There is ſomething gloomy, melancholy, and forbidding in the proſpect.—So ſpeaks the natural man, who is void of all ſpiritual diſcernment.—Would ſuch an one, however, deem any toil or danger too great to encounter, for the acquiſition of ſome earthly object? Would he not compaſs ſea and land, and riſk his health, yea, his life, to obtain the fleeting enjoyment of honour, riches, or pleaſure? And will he wonder, then, that a Chriſtian ſhould be willing to face the darkeſt ſcenes, when he knows that through theſe he ſhall paſs to the enjoyment of everlaſting honours; of riches, which will not make themſelves wings, and flee away; and of pleaſures, inconceivably exalted, unfading, and immortal?

When

When the heavens gather blackneſs, when thunders roll over his head, and lightnings flaſh around his frame, the natural man, at the very time that his heart ſhudders at the awful ſcene, will tell you, that theſe convulſions of nature are abſolutely neceſſary for the good of the creation; that the ſun is ſtill ſhining above the tempeſtuous atmoſphere, and that ere long, its rays will diſſipate the clouds, and exhibit to your view the happy effects of all this uproar and confuſion. With this pleaſing hope, he ſpeaks peace to his intruding fears; and, though he trembles, yet he enjoys the ſtorm.

Thus it is with the Faithful Chriſtian. When overtaken in his ſpiritual progreſs, by the blackeſt tempeſts that the devil, the world, and the fleſh, his moſt formidable adverſaries, can raiſe, he will nevertheleſs preſs forward with unremitting eagerneſs and ardour; and though

" his

" his ſoul may be caſt down, and diſ-
" quieted within him," though his whole nature may be ſhocked by the violence of the blaſt, yet will he ſtill " hope in " GOD," yet will he ſtill ſpeak comfort to his dejected ſpirit; as he is well aſſured, that all this could not happen without the Divine Permiſſion; that the Sun of Righteouſneſs ſtill ſhines in the firmament of his glory; and that the Prince of the Power of the Air, with all the horrors that ſurround him, muſt ſoon vaniſh before his all-piercing beams, and ſink confounded to his infernal abode.

The Pſalm from whence my text is taken, preſents us with a lively picture of a True Believer ſtruggling under ſome violent aſſaults from the enemies of his peace. Whether the diſtreſs of David was occaſioned by the perſecution of Saul, or the ſtraights to which he was reduced by the unnatural rebellion of his

his ſon Abſalom; whether it proceeded from a deep ſenſibility of thoſe remains of corruption, which lurk in the moſt regenerate breaſts; or from an apprehenſion, that GOD had withdrawn "the Light of his countenance" from his ſoul; in either of theſe caſes, his affliction muſt have been acute indeed, and he might well break forth into this affecting ſtrain of religious melancholy: "Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? "And why art thou diſquieted within "me?" Why doſt thou ſuffer theſe outward afflictions to bear down thy conſtancy, or theſe inward ſtruggles to weaken thy faith?—"Hope thou in "GOD."—Haſt thou not heretofore experienced, in innumerable inſtances, the Wonders of his Love? Hath not his Arm ſupported thee in the greateſt extremities? Hath not his countenance cheered thee in thy darkeſt moments?—Why, then, this ſtrange dejection now? O where is all thy wonted heroiſm fled?—

where

where that lively truſt and confidence in thy GOD, that has heretofore ſteeled thy breaſt againſt the arrows of adverſity? "Is his arm ſhortened that it can-"not ſave? Is his mercy clean gone for "ever? And hath GOD forgotten to be "gracious?"—No, my ſoul!—already do I feel his Animating Preſence—Sure I am, that "I ſhall yet praiſe him," for delivering me out of my preſent diſtreſſes—Sure I am, that the ſweet Influences of his BLESSED SPIRIT, will yet ſooth my deep diſquietude, and give health and chearfulneſs to my dejected countenance—yea, ſure I am, that he is ſtill "my GOD," my GOD by Covenant, my Guardian GOD, the GOD of my Life, the GOD of my Love.

Thus ſpake, thus triumphed, "the "man after GOD's own heart!" Doubtleſs the conflict was ſevere and tedious; but Faith was at length victorious. Noble encouragement this to every one, that

that hath enliſted under the banners of JESUS CHRIST, and commenced his Chriſtian Warfare!—Come then, ye Candidates for Heaven! ye Followers of the LAMB! ye Strangers and Pilgrims upon earth! that have already entered upon your journey, through this valley of tears, to the Heavenly Canaan! Come, let us take a view together of the difficulties and dangers which we are taught to expect upon the road! let us trace the ſources of that uneaſineſs and diſquietude, to which the beſt of Chriſtians are frequently expoſed, and as we proceed, apply to them the noble preſcription pointed out by the text: "Hope thou in GOD, for I ſhall yet "praiſe him, who is the health of my "Countenance and my GOD."

The firſt, and, I believe, the principal ſources of the ſincere Chriſtian's heavineſs and diſquietude, are thoſe remains of ſin and corruption, which ſtain the pureſt

pureſt and moſt regenerate breaſts. Under the firſt openings of Grace, the firſt dawnings of Divine Light and Love upon the ſoul, the change from death to life is frequently ſo great and tranſporting, that the young unpractiſed convert is loſt in admiration.—From the depths of his own miſery and corruption, he is raiſed to ſuch ſtupendous proſpects of Redeeming Love, that, like the diſciples on Mount Tabor, he is unwilling to leave the Divine Effulgence that ſurrounds him, to deſcend from the height of Goſpel Comfort, and to encounter the innumerable obſtacles that await his progreſs in the world below.—But when once the fervours of this firſt love are abated; when once the young candidate is called forth to teſtify his affection for his SAVIOUR, by acts of obedience, patience, reſignation, fortitude, under temporal as well as ſpiritual trials and calamities—then it is, that the clouds begin to gather—the day of diſtreſs approaches—

proaches—" his ſins take ſuch faſt hold " of him, that he is not able to look " up,"—his ſecret corruptions ſtart forth unexpectedly from every corner of his heart, and throw his whole ſoul into confuſion.—It is an attack for which he is unprepared; from a quarter which he little expected.—Scarce is he able to recollect his paſt experience; or, if he does, it is not with a view to ſtrengthen his faith, but to increaſe his melancholy. In the full bitterneſs of his ſoul he is ready to exclaim:

" O that I were as in months paſt, as " in the days when GOD preſerved me! " when his candle ſhined upon my head, " and when by his light I walked " through darkneſs."—Once I thought that I had gained a ſure refuge in my REDEEMER's Arms; I hoped that my peace was made, that I was a Child of GOD, and had received the earneſt of the SPIRIT in my Heart. But alas! I now fear,

fear, that this was but a pleaſing dream; that Satan transformed himſelf into an angel of light, to deceive my ſoul; that my converſion was a viſionary thing, not a real change of my corrupted nature.—If this be not the caſe, whence is it, that the ſorrows of my heart are thus enlarged?—If I am indeed a child of GOD, "Why go I thus heavily, "while the enemy oppreſſes me?"—And yet I hate theſe corruptions, which I feel ſo ſenſibly; and my greateſt diſtreſs and uneaſineſs is, that I do feel them. The deſire of my ſoul is towards GOD; and there is nothing in the whole world but what I would chearfully reſign, to be at peace with him.—Yea, I can lay my hand upon my heart, and ſafely declare, that grievous as the tranſgreſſions are, into which my corruptions have hurried me, yet I feel ſomething within me, that bids me hope, that the GOD whom I have offended, is the GOD whom I love.

Such are the ſad diſquietudes, which the latent remains of ſin frequently awaken in the Believer's breaſt! Many excellent Chriſtians there are, who go thus mourning and diſconſolate to their graves; whilſt a few, perhaps, after repeated conflicts, and repeated victories, obtain at length that ſweet aſſurance, which enabled the Apoſtle to declare, that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, "nor principalities, nor powers, nor "things preſent, nor things to come, "nor height, nor depth, nor any other "creature, ſhould ſeparate him from "the LOVE OF GOD, which is in "CHRIST JESUS."

As for thoſe, who are ſtill mourning, and refuſe to be comforted, who are continually expoſtulating with themſelves in the plaintive language of my text—"Why "art thou caſt down, O my ſoul! and "why art thou diſquieted within me?" Let us only aſk them, whether the frame of their

their minds is in any reſpect ſimilar to that of holy David's?—Doth thy ſoul, poor trembling Chriſtian! "pant after "thy GOD, as the hart panteth after the "water-brooks? Art thou athirſt for "GOD, even the living GOD?" Are the deſires of thine heart all centered in CHRIST JESUS? Doſt thou wiſh to know him more fully, to ſerve him more faithfully, to love him more ardently, to receive the ſanctifying influences of his Spirit here, in order to be qualified to dwell in everlaſting Communion with him hereafter? Is this the real ſtate of thy mind? Take comfort then! "Hope thou in GOD; for thou "ſhalt yet praiſe him, who is the health "of thy countenance and thy GOD."

But are there no other ſources of diſtreſs and diſquietude to the ſincere Chriſtian, than the latent corruptions of his own heart? Are not ſome of his ſevereſt trials occaſioned by the afflic-

tive diſpenſations of Divine Providence? Doubtleſs they are. For good and virtuous men are ſo far from being exempted from misfortunes and afflictions, that they are taught to expect a double portion—"for whom the Lord loveth, "he correcteth; and chaſteneth every "ſon that he receiveth."—Under the immediate influence of theſe ſevere viſitations, the "ſoul is indeed caſt down "and diſquieted:" It can ſcarcely penetrate the gloom, with which its ſorrows encompaſs it, or diſcover the Potent Arm that ſtruck the blow, and robbed it of its peace. Or if it ſhould ſee the Will of GOD in the infliction—how hard to reſign!—to kiſs the rod, and bleſs the correcting hand!

When dire diſeaſe ſpreads its fatal venom through the human frame, and robs us of the bloom of youth, and the joys of health—when proſperity withdraws her ſmile, and poverty, with her

her attendant woes, ſucceeds:—when death ſnatches a boſom friend or dear relative from our embraces, how difficult to adopt the language of the good old Prieſt? "It is the Lord's will—let him "do what ſeemeth him good."

The recollection of former proſperity, and of all the ſpiritual and temporal bleſſings which an Indulgent Heaven had with profuſion ſhowered on our heads, ſerves only to give additional weight to the preſent load of grief, and deepen the melancholy that clouds and oppreſſes the ſoul. The eye of Sorrow is perpetually looking back, and lamenting the loſs of objects, in which the miſtaken mind had fondly centered all its felicity. It rarely ventures to ſend forth one eager look into the region of Hope. It deems it impoſſible to turn a preſent diſtreſs into a preſent bleſſing: and can never conceive, that darkneſs itſelf ſhould be the very ſubſtance through which the

Light of Heaven muſt again be rendered viſible to the benighted heart.

In the moment of Job's deſpondency, under the ſevere trials with which he was viſited, he would have reaſoned and ſpoke far otherwiſe than he did, had it ſuited the purpoſes of Heaven to unveil at that moment the ſecret deſign of his preſent affliction. Had he diſcerned the Angel that was "riding in the whirl-"wind,"—had he beheld "the hand that "directed the ſtorm," he would doubtleſs have changed the language of his exclamation:—O my ſoul, he would then have ſaid, though thou art not "as in "months paſt, as in the days when "GOD preſerved thee;" yet have I a ſecret hope, that thou wilt ſoon feel again his Reviving Preſence, and praiſe him for greater bleſſings than thou haſt heretofore received.

Indeed,

Indeed, my brethren, the moſt ſeemingly ſevere diſpenſations, if we could raiſe our thoughts, for a few moments, above the conſiderations of fleſh and blood, would appear to be diſpenſations of mercy. Medicines, you know, are ſeldom ſweet or palatable:—and yet, would you not thank your phyſician for adminiſtering them, when he knows they are neceſſary for the recovery of your health?—And canſt thou then, O Chriſtian, repine, or be diſſatisfied with thy SAVIOUR, for mingling the bitter draught of affliction, when he foreſees, that thine everlaſting ſalvation, perhaps, depends upon the remedy? Every thing that ties thee to the world, keeps thee at a diſtance from CHRIST. Can thy SAVIOUR more effectually teſtify his affection for thee, than by breaking theſe cords, and thus leſſening thine attachment to the world?—Ceaſe, therefore, to repine at thy loſs!—Be not caſt down or diſquie-

ted!—Thy GOD hath not forſaken thee—he is only preparing thee for better times—"Hope thou therefore in him, "for thou ſhalt yet praiſe him, who is "the health of thy countenance and "thy GOD."

Laſtly, The world in which he lives, and the men with whom he is obliged to converſe, adminiſter new cauſes of ſorrow and diſquietude to the ſincere Chriſtian. The ſecret treachery of pretended friends, or the open malice of avowed enemies, the general diſreſpect and contempt with which virtue is treated, and the honours and encouragement which are given to vice, all conſpire to wound his breaſt, and even to render him leſs pleaſed than he wiſhes to be, with the ſociety of his fellow-creatures. For who that has the leaſt ſpark of zeal for the honour of his GOD, can bear to hear his Name blaſphemed,

phemed, and his religion ridiculed; to ſee his precepts violated with impunity, and his ordinances neglected and deſpiſed?—And yet to oppoſe theſe prevailing enormities, to teſtify an abhorrence of them by private reproofs, or public cenſures, is ſometimes deemed rudeneſs and impertinence. Yea, ſuch is the ſad degeneracy of mankind, that if we would be truly religious, now-a-days, we muſt dare to be ſingular.

But be not thou diſcouraged, thou Child of GOD! Though thou art placed in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation, and haſt reaſon to ſay, with David, "Wo is me, that I am con-"ſtrained to dwell with Meſhech, and "to have my habitation among the tents "of Kedar!—O that I had the wings of "a dove, for then would I flee away, "and be at reſt!"—though integrity, uprightneſs, and the fear of GOD ſhould be

be even baniſhed from the abodes of men—though the Church of GOD ſhould be laid level with the duſt, and the diſciples of a CRUCIFIED JESUS be ridiculed and reviled—yet fear thou not, neither be diſmayed!—GOD ſits at the helm of the univerſe—CHRIST JESUS will take care of "his own:"—and as for thyſelf, if, with Job, thou art determined "to hold faſt thy righte-"ouſneſs, and not to let it go, nor ſuf-"fer thine heart to reproach thee, ſo "long as thou liveſt"—if thou hopeſt in GOD, and truſteſt in the LORD thy SAVIOUR—if the Righteouſneſs of CHRIST is thy cloathing, and Faith in him thine impenetrable ſhield—be thine outward circumſtances in life what they will, believe me, thou art ſtill "under the defence of the Moſt High, "and ſafe under the Shadow of his "Wings." The ſtormy wind may blow, the billows of adverſity may riſe and rage—

rage—but whilſt thou haſt faſt hold of the ROCK OF AGES, thou canſt no more be moved by their blackeſt, rudeſt efforts, than are the ſtrong foundations of ſome ſtately edifice, by the light breezes of a ſummer ſky!

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE X.

A NOMINAL OR PARTIAL BELIEF IN THE GOSPEL, UNPROFITABLE.

St. JOHN, CHAP. ii. VER. 23, 24, 25.

DISCOURSE X.

St. JOHN, CHAP. ii. VER. 23, 24, 25.

"NOW WHEN HE WAS AT JERUSA-
"LEM AT THE PASSOVER, IN THE
"FEAST-DAY, MANY BELIEVED
"IN HIS NAME, WHEN THEY SAW
"THE MIRACLES WHICH HE DID.
"BUT JESUS DID NOT COMMIT
"HIMSELF UNTO THEM, BECAUSE
"HE KNEW ALL MEN: AND NEED-
"ED NOT THAT ANY SHOULD
"TESTIFY OF MAN; FOR HE
"KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN."

NO ſooner had the SON OF GOD, with infinite condeſcenſion, ſubmitted to the baptiſm of his illuſtrious Fore-runner, and had thereby been inaugurated,

augurated, as it were, into his prophetic office; no ſooner had he received the Teſtimony of his Father, by a Voice from Heaven, declaring, that "this "was his BELOVED SON, in whom he "was well pleaſed," than he entered upon his Public Miniſtry, and, by an unexampled ſeries of ſigns and wonders, made it abundantly manifeſt, that the Arm of Omnipotence was engaged in the ſupport of thoſe awful intereſting truths, which he delivered.

The Evangeliſt tells us, in the 11th verſe of this chapter, that this "be-"ginning of miracles JESUS did in "Cana of Galilee, and manifeſted "forth his Glory, and his diſciples be-"lieved on him." From whence we may conclude, that the firſt public miracle which he wrought, was at the marriage in Cana; that the deſign of his miracles was to manifeſt his Glory, to declare and prove the truth of his Meſſiahſhip;

Meſſiahſhip, the glorious errand on which he came into this world; and that the accompliſhment of this began to appear in the conviction of his diſciples who believed on him.

In order, therefore, to accompliſh "the "work which his Heavenly Father had "given him to do," he ſoon afterwards haſtened up to Jeruſalem, to attend the firſt paſſover that was celebrated after he had made his public appearance. His deſign herein, was doubtleſs to teſtify his veneration for his Father's ordinances; and as at this great ſolemnity, the whole nation of the Jews were aſſembled at Jeruſalem, it afforded him a glorious opportunity of opening his Heavenly Commiſſion, by ſome diſplay of the powers with which he was inveſted.

Accordingly, we read, that he no ſooner entered into the Temple, and be-

augurated, as it were, into his prophetic office; no ſooner had he received the Teſtimony of his Father, by a Voice from Heaven, declaring, that "this "was his BELOVED SON, in whom he "was well pleaſed," than he entered upon his Public Miniſtry, and, by an unexampled ſeries of ſigns and wonders, made it abundantly manifeſt, that the Arm of Omnipotence was engaged in the ſupport of thoſe awful intereſting truths, which he delivered.

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Accordingly, we read, that he no ſooner entered into the Temple, and be-

held one of its ſacred courts proſtituted to baſe and mercenary purpoſes, than, by an act of zeal, which alarmed and confounded the ſurrounding multitude, he authoritatively chaſtiſed and turned out the impious wretches, who were guilty of the prophanation. And when the Jews aſked him for ſome ſign, whereby they might be convinced of his authority to act as he had done, he gave them no other than a parabolical prediction of his future and glorious reſurrection from the dead; for he knew they aſked from no other motive, than to ſatisfy an idle curioſity, and without any deſign to accept of his doctrine, even though they might be convinced of the Divinity of his Miſſion. That this was really the caſe, we may conclude from the conduct of our BLESSED LORD, mentioned in my text: "Now when "he was at Jeruſalem at the paſſover, "in the feaſt-day, many believed in his "name, when they ſaw the miracles "which

" which he did. But JESUS did not " commit himſelf unto them, becauſe " he knew all men, and needed not " that any ſhould teſtify of man; for " he knew what was in man."

In ſpeaking from which words, I ſhall, in the firſt place, point out the reaſons of our SAVIOUR's conduct towards thoſe perſons, of whom it is ſaid here, that they " believed on his name:" and ſecondly, I ſhall ſhew in what ſenſe they may be applicable to many of thoſe who now live under the Light of the Goſpel.

And Firſt, It is ſaid, that " JESUS " did not commit himſelf unto them;" that is to ſay, he did not chuſe to truſt himſelf to them, to put himſelf in their power. He did not chuſe to aſſociate with them, to enroll them in the number of his diſciples, to make them his boſom companions; and for this reaſon,

ſays the Evangeliſt, becauſe "he knew "all men, and needed not that any "ſhould teſtify of man; for he knew "what was in man."

Here we have an ample proof of the DIVINITY of CHRIST; for, ſurely, the Evangeliſt would not have dared to have aſcribed the attribute of Omniſcience to any created being. We may ceaſe to wonder, then, that our LORD did not unboſom himſelf to theſe believers: for as he knew the hearts of all men, he muſt have diſcovered ſome latent corruptions, unfavourable to himſelf and his doctrine, which diſqualified them from receiving any further notices of the nature and deſign of his Miſſion. What theſe corruptions were, may be gathered from Scripture without much difficulty.

The long ceſſation of miracles, doubtleſs, contributed to engage the attention of

of the Jews to thoſe which were wrought by JESUS CHRIST; eſpecially, as they excelled the miracles of the Prophets, which they read of in their ſacred books, in many diſtinguiſhing particulars. For our LORD wrought them in his own name; they were more in number than the prophetic, and altogether of the benevolent kind, adapted to the wants and exigences of human nature; whereas thoſe of the prophets were generally alarming, and frequently diſtreſſing. All theſe circumſtances conſpired to convince them, that JESUS CHRIST muſt be, indeed, the promiſed MESSIAH. On the other hand, their falſe, but high raiſed expectations of a temporal kingdom, of worldly power, affluence, and grandeur, rendered their preſent belief vain and unprofitable. They fondly imagined, perhaps, that poor and humble as the BLESSED JESUS now appeared, he would ere long, by ſigns and wonders, make his way to the throne of David. Every

aſpiring politician among them began to flatter himſelf, that he ſhould ſoon behold Cæſar ſuppliant at his feet. The Phariſees and doctors of the law hoped to ſee the time, when the wiſeſt and proudeſt of the Pagan prieſts and philoſophers ſhould deem it their higheſt honour to receive inſtructions from Moſes's chair, and become the pupils of ſome learned Gamaliel.

Poſſeſſed with ſuch notions, filled with ſuch carnal expectations as theſe, they were altogether unqualified to become Diſciples of JESUS. His omniſcient eye penetrated the inmoſt receſſes of their hearts, and diſcovered thoſe ſecret ſprings of corruption, which would ere long be ſet at work to oppoſe the ſpirituality of his kingdom.

Had he given out, indeed, that he came to deliver them from the Roman yoke, and make all the nations of the world

world their tributaries, the air would have reſounded with "Hoſannas to the "Son of David;" his ſteps, wherever he came, would have been ſtrewed with palms, and triumphal arches erected in honour of his appearance. But let him once declare, that he comes to reſcue them from the grievous yoke of ſin, to fight againſt and overcome all their ſpiritual enemies, and to eſtabliſh his kingdom in their hearts; you will ſoon find their Hoſannas changed into dire imprecations, and "Away with him, away "with him—crucify him!" the beſt wiſhes their hearts can frame, the moſt reſpectful language that their tongues can utter.

Had he been a blind zealot for the law; had he yielded an implicit obedience to the traditions of the elders; had he encouraged the populace to pay a greater regard to the deciſions of the Rabbies, than to the writings of Moſes

and the prophets; had he propagated that popular doctrine of the Jews, that their Deſcent from Abraham, according to the fleſh, was ſufficient for their juſtification before GOD, and that not one of that holy nation ſhould finally periſh; had he refuſed to give a ſingle crumb of the children's bread to dogs, to extend the bleſſings of Iſrael to the poor benighted Gentiles; then, indeed, every tongue, every pen, every arm, would have been employed in his defence, and nothing but dire anathemas would have been thundered forth againſt his adverſaries. But let him once bear his teſtimony againſt the unlawful impoſitions of the phariſees and ſcribes; let him call them the commandments of men, and encourage his hearers to throw off the cumbrous load of human traditions; let him declare, that he himſelf came to write the law in their hearts, and by his own redeeming power, to enable them to fulfil it, according to its true

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and ſpiritual meaning; let him open his hand and his heart to publicans and ſinners, and tell the Gentile world, that they have an equal ſhare in the covenant of grace with the ſeed of Abraham, provided they do but comply with the condition of that covenant; let him tell them, that "mercy is better than "ſacrifice," and that "love is the ful-"filling of the law;" that "except a "man be born of Water and of the Spi-"rit, he cannot enter into the King-"dom of GOD;" that though all Iſrael ſhould refuſe the offers of the Goſpel, yet "GOD is able to raiſe up children "to Abraham," even a ſpiritual ſeed, "out of the ſtones," the hardened and idolatrous Gentiles—"that the hour "was coming, when men ſhould nei-"ther in mount Gerizim, nor yet at "Jeruſalem, worſhip the Father—but "when every true worſhipper ſhould "worſhip GOD in Spirit and in truth;"

let

let the BLESSED JESUS thus ſpeak, and preach, and act, and he will ſoon find, that men cannot eaſily away with doctrines ſo unpopular, ſo contradictory to favourite prejudices, temporal intereſts, and carnal inclinations. He will ſoon find the malice of men leagued in dreadful confederacy with the powers of darkneſs, to inſult his perſon, vilify his actions, and fruſtrate his benevolent intentions.

Such was, in all probability, the conduct and character of thoſe partial believers on his name, mentioned in my text, unto whom our BLESSED LORD "did not commit himſelf, becauſe he "knew what was in them." Yea, it is no unreaſonable thing to ſuppoſe, that theſe very perſons, when they found how egregiouſly they were diſappointed in their expectations, joined themſelves at laſt with that abandoned multitude, who

who were clamorous for his condemnation, and aſſiſting at his crucifixion.

II. I now proceed to ſhew, that ſuch a conduct or character may be found, even among thoſe, who now live under the Light of the Goſpel.

How can this be? perhaps ſome are ready to ſay—Surely, there are none among us, that have any ſuch carnal views or expectations as thoſe Jews manifeſted, whoſe characters you have been deſcribing. Why ſhould you want to trace a likeneſs, where there is not one ſingle feature that agrees? It is true, the features may be different, the complexion different, but the Nature is the ſame: they are men, and human nature, in its unregenerate ſtate, is the ſame in every age. Time, circumſtances, cuſtoms, prejudices, education, may change; but

but the ſpirit and temper of the natural man will diſcover itſelf in Jews and Gentiles, Pagans, Mahometans, and thoſe that call themſelves Chriſtians.

Wherever the Goſpel, indeed, hath ſhed its enlightening beams, idolatry, ignorance, ſuperſtition, and cruelty, have, more or leſs, been diſſipated by its Luſtre. The outward man has been poliſhed and civilized; the abſurdities in the Pagan theology expoſed and exploded; and the errors or deficiencies of their morality, have either been corrected or ſupplied. Such have been the aſtoniſhing influence of CHRIST's Religion, wherever it hath been promulgated. But alas! little does it avail to cleanſe the ſtream, while the fountain remains impure: little does it avail to reform the outward man, whilſt deep corruption, and unconquered enmity againſt GOD, rankles at the heart. Let the firſt blow then be ſtruck at the root

root of the tree; let the firſt arrow be aimed at the human heart.

And here it is, that the nominal or partial believer, in the Name of JESUS, trembles. Aſk him, whether he is really convinced of the Truth of the Goſpel—he will wonder at the queſtion—it is as clear as the ſun at noon-day—the evidence flaſhes irreſiſtible conviction upon the underſtanding—So doubtleſs ſaid the Jews, who ſaw the miracles which JESUS wrought. But proceed further—aſk him whether this belief has had any influence on his heart; whether it has deſtroyed the enmity that ſubſiſted there betwixt him and his GOD; whether it has led him to deteſt himſelf, and his ſinful ſtate, and to hunger and thirſt after CHRIST and his Righteouſneſs; whether his heart is changed; whether his will is turned from ſeeking happineſs in himſelf, and the world, to ſeek it in CHRIST alone. Aſk him this,

this, and he will be at a loſs for an anſwer—He knows of no other faith, than ſuch an aſſent of the mind to the truth of the goſpel, as thoſe perſons in my text gave to CHRIST, upon ſeeing his miracles.

Alas! how many Chriſtians are there, that are ſtarving upon this barren and unprofitable faith? how many, who live in open violation of the plaineſt precepts of the Goſpel? who cry, "Ho-"ſanna to the Son of David," with their lips, but crucify him in their conduct; who would fain be enrolled in the number of his diſciples, but are loth to part with their favourite luſts to obtain this honour: who would have their miniſters preach ſoft things, and propheſy deceit, rather than break in upon their ſinful repoſe, by any ſalutary alarms and reproofs? How many are there too, who content themſelves with a cold formal round of outward obſervances;

ſervances; who, inſtead of worſhipping GOD, make a god of their worſhip; who are ſo careful to preſerve every punctilio of outward devotion in their behaviour and deportment, that they never once think of any reigning depravity of heart; who are ſo well ſatisfied with the praiſes of men, that they forget to ſeek for the applauſe of GOD? How many are there, that do indeed believe in the Name of CHRIST, but at the ſame time avail themſelves of their profeſſion, as a cloak for the baſeſt and moſt horrid deſigns; who under the ſolemn guiſe of extraordinary ſanctity, conceal the moſt ſelfiſh, proud, and malicious hearts?

Theſe are ſome of the characters among profeſſing Chriſtians, that bear a ſtrong reſemblance to thoſe mentioned in my text. If any of you, my brethren, ſhould think, that you diſcover ſome of your own features in the picture, I pray

GOD

God that you may be enabled to correct them. Strike not the hand that probes your wound;—blame not your miniſters for ſpeaking the truth! Better is it for them to expoſe themſelves to your cenſures by their boldneſs, than by their ſilence to win your praiſes, at the expence of your eternal ſalvation, and their own. We know not your hearts; we can only judge by appearances—and wherever theſe are favourable, Chriſtian candour and charity will give them chearful credit. You may, indeed, deceive us; and I believe religious deceits are as frequent, if not more ſo, than any other—but, remember, you cannot deceive or elude our Maſter's all-ſeeing eye. Naked and ſtript of every artful guiſe, your thoughts, your ſecret principles and motives of action, lay open to his view. He "knows what "is in man:" he knows the deep deceit and deſperate wickedneſs of the human heart.

heart. He knows by what amazing ways the hypocrite is led to deceive others, and in the end himſelf. His intimate knowledge of your hearts ſhould make you tremble, then, leſt he ſhould refuſe to commit himſelf to you, as he did to the Jews in my text. And are you aware of the dreadful conſequences of ſuch a refuſal? Do you know, that you are loſt and undone, if JESUS does not commit himſelf to your ſouls? If JESUS is not your friend, who is to be your advocate at the bar of GOD? If JESUS does not interpoſe, what arm can ſhield you from the Vengeance of Heaven?

But are there any among you, who have not only their underſtandings convinced of the "Truth as it is in "JESUS," but their hearts engaged in the practice of his religion; who not only "believe in his name, becauſe of "the miracles which he did," but live

and delight in the doctrines which he preached, and the life which he led; who not only aſſent to Chriſtianity as true, but embrace it as good; who not only deſire CHRIST for their SAVIOUR, but own him for their Sovereign? To ſuch perſons, I may venture to declare, he will commit himſelf, with all the Riches of his Grace, with all the Wonders of his Love: to ſuch ſouls, he is united by the tendereſt ties: they are "ſheltered under his wings, "they are ſafe beneath his feathers, "his faithfulneſs and truth is their "ſhield and buckler;" they repoſe all their confidence in him; to him they unboſom all their cares; from him they look for all their comforts—And this is the language of their love— "The Lord is my Strength and my "Salvation—whom then ſhall I fear? "The Lord is the Strength of my Life, "of whom then ſhall I be afraid? "The LORD is my Shepherd, there-

"fore

" fore ſhall I lack nothing: he ma-
" keth me to lie down in green paſ-
" tures, he leadeth me beſide the ſtill
" waters—My beloved is mine, and I
" am his,—He is faireſt among ten
" thouſand—This is my beloved, and
" this is my friend, O daughter of
" Jeruſalem!"

DISCOURSE XI.

The Life and Death of the Righteous.

Psalm xxxvii. Ver. 37.

DISCOURSE XI.

PSALM xxxvii. VER. 37.

"MARK THE PERFECT MAN, AND BE-
"HOLD THE UPRIGHT; FOR THE
"END OF THAT MAN IS PEACE."

"DUST thou art, and unto duſt
"thou ſhalt return," was the awful ſentence denounced againſt rebellious man by his infinitely juſt Creator. No ſooner had Adam fallen from that ſtate of innocence, perfection, and intimate communion with GOD, in which his light, and life, and happineſs ſupreme conſiſted, than he became

ſubject to the power and dominion of Sin and Satan. By this firſt man's tranſgreſſion ſin entered into world, and became the prolific parent of an innumerable offspring, that ſet themſelves continually in array, againſt the peace and happineſs of our whole ſpecies. The laſt, the moſt hideous and implacable of theſe adverſaries is Death, the king of terrors, to whoſe iron ſway we muſt all inevitably ſubmit. Neither age, nor ſex, nor rank, nor fortune, nor merit, can exempt us. Thick, faſt, and fatal, his arrows fly abroad. Every one of us, within his own little ſphere, is almoſt daily preſented with inſtances of his unlimited power. Could we be placed in a ſituation, that would enable us to take in the whole race of mankind at one view, the world would appear to us like a vaſt theatre, overſpread with ſcenes of blood, where this grim ghaſtly tyrant, and his infernal meſſengers and attendants, were

continually

continually ſtalking from place to place, increaſing and exulting in the carnage.

On one part, we ſhould behold fields covered with the carcaſes of thouſands ſlain in battle; on another, whole cities unpeopled by a deſtroying peſtilence: here, we ſhould ſee a monarch laid in the duſt, who was the comfort and darling of his ſubjects; there an infamous oppreſſor tumbled from his throne, and conſtrained himſelf to ſubmit to a fate, which he had frequently and unjuſtly haſtened upon others. On this ſide, a diſconſolate widow bewailing the loſs of an affectionate huſband; on the other, a "Rachel weeping for her children, "and will not be comforted, becauſe "they are not." Here the long-loved partner of his heart is torn from the embraces of an afflicted ſpouſe; there, a pious, tender and indulgent father reſigns, without reluctance, to the ſtroke,

ſtroke, and leaves to his lamenting children the rich legacy of an exemplary life and death.

Amid this general devaſtation, whilſt "thouſands fall beſide us, and ten thou-"ſands at our right hand," one would think, we ſhould ſtand in need of no other motive to awaken us to a ſenſe of our danger, and excite us to make uſe of ſuch methods, as will moſt effectually ſupport us under it. One would think, that ſo melancholy a proſpect would naturally lead us to ſome ſuch reflections as theſe:

Every day almoſt informs me of the death of one or other of my friends or acquaintance. Many younger, and ſeemingly more healthy than myſelf, have I followed to the grave. Surely I am mortal, as well as they. Surely I am not exempt from the common lot of human nature, but ſooner

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or later muſt obey the ſummons of death. To-day he knocks at the door of my neighbour; to-morrow, perhaps, he may knock at mine—and ſhould this be the caſe, am I prepared for ſuch a viſit?

The misfortune is, my brethren, that men chooſe to keep this proſpect at a diſtance; and whenever theſe reflections come acroſs their minds, as frequently, and in ſpite of all their endeavours to reſiſt them, they will obtrude, they immediately ſeek to baniſh them, by engaging in a round of worldly cares and pleaſures.

But why, vain man! why doſt thou ſo induſtriouſly ſeek to drive from thy heart the thought of death?—Is it that it embitters thy cup of delights, and caſts a deadly damp upon thy ſprightlieſt enjoyments? Does his grim viſage, and envenomed ſhaft, affright thee? Does horror freeze thy blood, when thy

thy imagination preſents to thee the ſhroud, the coffin, the cold dark grave, and all the diſmal ſcenery of death? Doubtleſs theſe objects cannot but alarm thee greatly. But if thou art ingenuous and ſincere, thou canſt not but acknowledge, that thy terror and uneaſineſs proceed not ſo much from the apprehenſions of death itſelf, as of the ſubſequent ſtate, into which it inſtantaneouſly hurries thee.

Fear is one of the moſt diſagreeable ſenſations that human nature is ſubject to; and the fear of death is the greateſt of all fears. To overcome it, or even to allay it, requires more than human fortitude. Our natural ſtrength will ſtand us in poor ſtead in this dire encounter. There is, however, a remedy, and a never-failing one too, which the GOD of Infinite Love hath provided for us. The fear of death is a ſpiritual malady: the great phyſician of ſouls

ſouls hath, therefore, furniſhed us with a noble preſcription. It is at hand. You have it in my text: and, if you are humble and patient of inſtruction, you cannot but derive conſiderable advantages from it. "Mark the perfect "man, and behold the upright; for "the End of that man is Peace."

The words are elegantly expreſſive of the way and means, by which alone we can obtain an undiſturbed peace and ſerenity of mind through life, and an unſhaken firmneſs and conſolation in death. This being the great and important leſſon which they inculcate, I ſhall naturally be led from them to ſet before you the LIFE and DEATH of the RIGHTEOUS MAN; only making this previous obſervation, that by the words "perfect" and "upright" here made uſe of, we are to underſtand, that degree of holineſs and perfection, which

it

it is poſſible for every one of us to attain on this ſide the grave.

I am ſpeaking to a Chriſtian audience; and, as a Chriſtian miniſter, I am bound to give you the Life and Character of the Righteous Man, agreeable to that glorious ſyſtem of Divine Truth, which GOD hath been graciouſly pleaſed to reveal to mankind, by his own Well-beloved SON.

According to this Word of Truth, the Righteous Man is he, whoſe actions are conformable to the WILL OF GOD, have an immediate tendency to promote the GLORY OF GOD, and flow from no other motive than the LOVE OF GOD. But, if theſe things are ſo, if it requires all this to be righteous, who is he that ſhall be ſaved? Does not this far ſurpaſs the natural ſtrength of man? Aſk the experienced Chriſtian,

Chriſtian, and you will find him at no loſs for an anſwer.

Born in ſin, and laden with actual tranſgreſſion, poor guilty man cannot advance one ſingle ſtep in the paths of righteouſneſs, till he lays hold by Faith on the hand of a REDEEMER. Secure of this, with humble confidence he approaches the Throne of Grace, and aſks of his Heavenly Father, that ſanctifying SPIRIT, which he hath promiſed to beſtow liberally upon all thoſe, that believe on his SON. Here then is a rich fountain opened to the houſe of David: here is the pure and inexhauſtible Source, from whence alone true Holineſs can flow. "He that is "born of GOD overcometh the world." "The love of GOD is ſhed abroad in "our hearts by the SPIRIT, which he "hath given us." Till we are born of this Spirit, all our righteouſneſs is but unrighteouſneſs: till we have this principle

principle of Love in our ſouls, all our doings are nothing worth. That Image of GOD, which man loſt by his firſt diſobedience, can only be renewed by the ſame creating energy, that "breathed into his noſtrils the breath "of life." "It is the SPIRIT alone, "who beareth witneſs to our ſpirit, "that we are the children of GOD."

Actuated by this Divine Principle, "the good man, out of the good treaſure "of his heart, bringeth forth good "things." His actions muſt be conformable to the Will of GOD, they muſt have a tendency to promote the Glory of GOD, they muſt flow from a Love and Veneration for GOD, becauſe they are immediately inſpired by the Spirit of GOD, even by that Spirit which "worketh in us to will and to "do, according to his good pleaſure."

"Except

"Except your righteouſneſs ſhall ex-
"ceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes
"and Phariſees," ſays our BLESSED LORD, "ye cannot enter into the King-
"dom of Heaven." Theſe Scribes and Phariſees were extremely rigid and exact in their obſervance of the ceremonial law, and ſo very minute as to "pay tithes of mint, and anniſe, and "cummin." Whence is it, then, that our SAVIOUR ſo repeatedly condemns them? Why, becauſe their ſole motive to this practice, was ſinful and worldly: they "did it, that they might "be ſeen of men;" that they might be diſtinguiſhed by greetings in all public places, and honoured with the venerable appellation of "Rabbi, "Rabbi!"

I would fain hope, that, among Chriſtian ſocieties, there are few, who are actuated by this Phariſaical principle. But I fear, that there are too many,

who build their hopes of Salvation upon ſundry external performances, which are indeed right, and their bounden duty, but which are of no avail in the ſight of GOD, unleſs they flow from that Spirit of Love, which I have juſt mentioned. All the outward ordinances of religion are to be conſidered as channels of Divine Grace, by which it is conveyed to thoſe who have it not, and ſtrengthened and increaſed in thoſe who have already received it. The Children of GOD alone, even ſuch as have received this Spirit of Adoption and Love, are they that profit by theſe outward ordinances. It is to them alone, that they are "the "ſavour of life unto life."

Having thus ſeen the grand principle and ſource, from whence alone all Righteouſneſs can flow; let us now attend to the influence, which it hath upon the life and converſation of him,

to

to whom GOD hath vouchſafed to communicate it. "Mark the perfect man, "and behold the upright; for the End "of that man is Peace."

Obſerve him, firſt, in the devout exerciſes of religion: his very countenance glows with the flame that is kindled in his heart. By the Spirit of Prayer, he is raiſed far above this ſcene of vanity: the world, with all its empires, and kingdoms, and riches, and pomps, and pleaſures, ſinks beneath his feet. He is borne upon the wings of Love to the Heaven of Heavens: he mixes with that immortal Choir of Angels and Seraphs, that ſurround the Throne of God: nay, he enjoys, in ſome degree, the Beatific Preſence of GOD himſelf. His ſoul is poſſeſſed of that "Peace of GOD, which paſſeth all "underſtanding;" of that tranſcendently great and glorious joy, which is beyond the power of words to expreſs.

In the courſe of his meditations, the wonders of REDEEMING LOVE paſs in order before his view, and make deeper and deeper impreſſions upon his yielding heart. His eyes are fixed to the top of trembling Calvary—to a CRUCIFIED SAVIOUR--groaning--bleeding—dying for his ſins! At this inſtance of unexampled tenderneſs and affection, his love blazes afreſh; his heart is melted beneath the flame; and his whole ſoul ruſhes forth, as it were, to embrace ſo Compaſſionate a REDEEMER. He has no reſt, till he finds himſelf in the Arms of his BELOVED, where, ſhielded from the temptations of the world, and the aſſaults of Satan, he enjoys an Heavenly Peace and Repoſe, which nothing here below can rob him of.

View him, ſecondly, in the practice of thoſe ſocial duties which he ſtands engaged to perform to his brethren, conſidered

conſidered either as the Workmanſhip of the ſame Almighty Creator, or as fellow-members with himſelf of "the "Myſtical Body of CHRIST." In conformity to the excellent precept of the Apoſtle, he finds himſelf conſtantly diſpoſed to "do good unto all men; but "eſpecially unto thoſe that are of the "houſhold of Faith."—"He is a com-"panion of all thoſe that fear GOD, and "keep his commandments." His love to his brethren is always proportioned to the degree of love, which they exerciſe towards GOD: conſequently, none can be his intimates, but thoſe, whoſe hearts are animated by the ſame warmth of affection which he continually feels. To others, however, he is always ready to miniſter in temporal as well as ſpiritual things: "He is eyes to the blind, "and feet to the lame:" his preſence brightens the gloom of poverty, and chears the retreats of diſtreſs: at his approach, the languiſhing ſick revive,

and the diſconſolate mourner ſmiles; the tears of the orphan ceaſe to flow, and the hopeleſs widow ſings for joy. The ſame Spirit of Love diffuſes itſelf throughout his whole conduct in every relation, which Providence calls him to ſuſtain: the ſame Divine Principle, working in his ſoul, renders him a dutiful child, an affectionate huſband, a tender father, a kind maſter, an obedient ſubject, a juſt magiſtrate, a ſincere friend. Thus is his whole life a ſeries of benevolent actions, every one of which is attended with that ſweet Peace of Mind, that flows from an approving conſcience.

Conſider him, in the next place, either as bleſſed by the hand of Providence with a flow of proſperity, or viſited with the rigours of adverſity. In the former caſe, his affluence is ſanctified by pious and charitable uſes: he expends none of it upon the luxuries

uries and vanities of this world; but conſiders himſelf only as a ſteward entruſted with it by his LORD and MASTER, for the good of his brethren, to be employed in the relief of thoſe poor famiſhed ſouls, for whom as well as for him his Compaſſionate SAVIOUR died. Is adverſity his portion? he ſubmits to it with patience and reſignation: nay, he deems it a bleſſing, and kiſſes the rod wherewith he is chaſtiſed. His Faith and Love are always at hand, and adminiſter to him an unfailing conſolation and ſupport. His peace of mind remains inviolate; ſince he is taught by the Spirit of Truth, that abideth in his breaſt, to receive every diſpenſation of his Heavenly Father with ſubmiſſion, yea, with thankſgiving.

Laſtly. To finiſh the character of "the perfect, upright man," let us at-

tend to the firmneſs, peace, and ſerenity of ſoul, with which he meets the approaches of death.

Come, then, my Fellow-Chriſtians, accompany me for once to a ſcene, which I could wiſh was more frequently the object of your attention and ſerious reflection—accompany me to the Death-bed of the RIGHTEOUS! Nor be alarmed at the invitation, or imagine that I intend to depreſs your ſpirits, and make you melancholy. It is his laſt conflict with reluctant nature, and the Powers of darkneſs—but the HERO is victorious and triumphant.

To him, who has obtained an intereſt by Faith in the All-atoning Blood of a REDEEMER; who hath experienced the Birth of the SON OF GOD in his ſoul; whoſe heart and affections are ſanctified by the Indwelling of the SPIRIT OF LOVE; who, by the powerful aid of the Same Spirit, hath been enabled

enabled to triumph over the world, the fleſh, and the devil; whoſe "converſation is in Heaven," and whoſe hopes are fixed in a better country beyond the grave—to ſuch an one, death is ſo far from being a rude, unwelcome, gueſt, that he is embraced with all the eagerneſs and ſatisfaction with which we receive a long-expected friend. Ghaſtly and terrific as he is, the reflection, that he is come to reſcue him from this ſcene of temptation, and tranſport him to the boſom of his FATHER and his GOD, ſtrips the monſter of his native horrors, and irradicates the gloom in which he makes his appearance.

Stretched upon a bed of ſickneſs, languiſhing beneath the ſucceſſive ſhocks of ſome inveterate diſeaſe; ſurrounded, perhaps, by an afflicted wife, with her lovely train of weeping innocents—behold! the good, perfect, upright man lies

lies calm, peaceful, and unruffled, amid ſo many rude aſſaults. His Faith hath fixed him to the ROCK OF AGES; and the ſtorms of adverſity can never beat him off—

"I know that my REDEEMER liv-
"eth," ſays the expiring Hero. I know, that "he that ſpeaketh in righteouſ-
"neſs, is mighty to ſave." "Though
"I walk through the valley of the
"ſhadow of death, I will fear no evil." Though the region I am about to travel through, is dreary, covered with midnight darkneſs, and inveſted with foul fiends and legions of devils—yet I know, that the Rays of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS will enlighten my path. I have his buckler to repel the fury of the darts of my adverſaries; I have his "rod and ſtaff" to comfort and ſupport me. The ſtruggle betwixt life and death, is a painful one, it is true —but it is a very ſhort one. Shall I

ſhrink

ſhrink at the agony of a moment; when that agony is to open the glories of Paradiſe upon my ſoul?—Shall I recoil from the embraces of death, when I know that he is my friend and deliverer, who alone can unfetter my ſoul, and releaſe me from this priſon of clay?—Weep not, then, thou dear afflicted partner of my heart! weep not, ye ſweet innocent pledges of our chaſte affection!—I have learned not to weep even for you—Surely, ye would not keep me back from my REDEEMER, when his Arms are ſtretched forth to receive me!—It is he alone that gives me confidence in this hour of danger; and the ſame that I feel for myſelf, he teaches me likewiſe to feel for you—He will be an Huſband to my diſconſolate widow; —he will be a Father to my orphan babes! I have not a wiſh to continue one moment longer here—"my deſire is "to depart, and to be with CHRIST." An holy impatience hath taken poſſeſ-

ſion

ſion of my ſoul. I can brook no delay. "O why are his chariot wheels "ſo long in coming? why tarry the "wheels of his chariot? Come "LORD "JESUS! come quickly!"—

Such, my brethren, is the character of the RIGHTEOUS MAN, and ſuch the peace and ſerenity of mind which accompanies him through life, though more fully and eminently diſplayed at the approaches of death. Chearfully compoſed, he takes his farewell of mortality; and flies, on the Wings of Love, to that Paradiſe of bliſs, which his REDEEMER hath prepared for his reception, where Joys Immortal cluſter round the Throne of the HIGHEST, and Saints ſing everlaſting Hallelujahs to GOD and the LAMB!

DISCOURSE XII.

JESUS SLEEPING IN THE SHIP.

St. MATTHEW, CHAP. viii. latter Part of VER. 24.

DISCOURSE XII.

St. MATTHEW, CHAP. viii. latter Part of VER. 24.

"BUT HE WAS ASLEEP."

VARIOUS were the methods, by which the SON OF GOD, during his pilgrimage on earth, ſought to convince his diſciples of their own natural weakneſs and inability to extricate themſelves from the leaſt of thoſe evils, to which they were continually expoſed; and of the neceſſity of applying to him for thoſe ſupernatural powers, with which his Heavenly Father had inveſted him for their benefit,

benefit, as well as for that of the whole human race. By the plaineſt and moſt familiar inſtructions; by the moſt eaſy and obvious alluſions; by diſplays of power, far ſuperior to aught their eyes had ſeen, or their ears had heard; and, above all, by his own Illuſtrious Example, he laboured, with affectionate anxiety and unwearied perſeverance, to awaken in them thoſe Heavenly Senſibilities, on the perception and exertion of which, their preſent as well as future happineſs wholly depended.

Sometimes he availed himſelf of a providential diſplay of the Divine Bounty and Goodneſs; ſometimes, of a providential deliverance from imminent and alarming difficulties:—nay, ſometimes, he permitted them to fall into the extremity of danger, that he might give them an immediate and moſt ſenſible demonſtration of his ability to ſave them. In the paſſage, from whence my text is taken,

taken, we have a very remarkable inſtance of the latter kind.

Fatigued and oppreſſed with thoſe Labours of Love, in which he was perpetually employed, his human nature required a little repoſe. During his engagements with the multitude, his diſciples, agreeable to his direction, had prepared a ſhip, into which he afterwards entered with them: "And there "aroſe a great tempeſt in the ſea, in-"ſomuch that the ſhip was covered "with waves—But he was aſleep."

Every circumſtance of our REDEEMER's Life had a manifeſt reference to that Great Work, which his Heavenly Father had given him to do. The common refreſhments of nature were ſanctified to this ſalutary purpoſe: and even his ſleep was made ſubſervient to the benefit and improvement of his diſciples.

Peaceful and ſerene, amid the war of nature's elements, the Lord of Nature lay, unhurt by their conflicts, and ſuperior to their fierceſt rage! Nor could aught have rouſed him from this ſweet compoſure, but that Divine Sympathetic feeling of Love, which ever awakes at the cry of human diſtreſs.

At the proſpect of approaching death, the fears of his diſciples were inſtantly alarmed; and, together with theſe, an inward conviction of their own impotence prompted them to exclaim, in the language of deſpondency and hope, "Lord, ſave us! we periſh." Recollecting the various inſtances, in which they had ſeen their Maſter's Power manifeſted to others, they eagerly applied to him in their preſent diſtreſs, in hopes that he would exerciſe the ſame power in their favour. "Know-
"ing whereof they were made, re-
"membering that they were but
"duſt,"

"duſt," he made the moſt affectionate allowances for their timidity; and removed their terrors by this mild and gentle rubuke: "Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith!" Were ye once poſſeſſed of that firm Reliance on my Heavenly Father, and that entire Submiſſion to his Bleſſed Will which I feel in my heart, and which I have been ſo long labouring to communicate to your's, you would have turned to that Divine Power, which now lies dormant in your breaſts, and it would have reſtored as effectual a calm to the fears and agitations of your earthly part, as I now do, by the ſole motion of my will, to theſe contending elements of nature.

Every individual of our fallen race may juſtly be compared to that frail bark, which the diſciples had prepared for their Maſter. The earthly nature, with all its infirmities and corruptions,

is properly repreſented by the weak and wayward diſciples themſelves. In every human heart there is lodged an Heavenly Power and Virtue, which may be ſaid to ſleep, till it is awakened and called forth by ſome inward or outward tempeſt, alarming the fears of the earthly man, and preſſing him to ſeek for refuge to a ſource, of which he had been heretofore ignorant or regardleſs. For the truth of this, let us appeal to the common ſenſe and experience of mankind.

In every unconverted perſon, whether he be a philoſopher, or a man of the world; whether the idol he worſhips be a ſyſtem of abſtract ideas, without ſenſe or feeling; or whether it be merely the ſenſe and feelings of corrupt nature, voluptuouſneſs, pride, or covetouſneſs; certain it is, that the Powers of Heaven are in a ſtate of Inactivity in his breaſt. Theſe Powers might,

might, indeed, gradually open and operate with the gradual growth of the body: but ſuch is the ſtrange corruption of our nature, that they are ſoon checked, either by the pride of human reaſon, or the prevalence of human paſſion. Theſe ſhut up the ſpiritual ſenſes of the Inward Man, and, according to the expreſſion of the Apoſtle, "blind the minds of thoſe that believe "not."

The philoſopher, who is determined not to believe the exiſtence of GOD, or even his own exiſtence, and that of the world around him, till he can convince himſelf by a chain of reaſoning, may with truth be ſaid, to lull his internal powers and ſenſes to ſleep. For if he would ſuffer them to ſee, and judge, and could attend to their motions and dictates, every primary and fundamental truth of religion would ſtrike theſe ſenſes with

with the ſame fulneſs of conviction, that the outward light, ſtriking upon the organs of viſion, impreſſes upon the mind.

In like manner, the man who rolls in worldly affluence, and baſks in the ſunſhine of temporal proſperity, is too apt to ſuffer this Offspring of Heaven to remain inactive in his breaſt. But when clouds ariſe, when tempeſts gather, and obſcure the light of this elementary ſun, he is then prompted to explore a new ſun, a new firmament, a new heaven, and a new earth, correſponding to the ſpiritual ſenſes of that Inward Man, who is hereby awakened, and taught where to look for, and how to receive, influences and impreſſions of ſolid and permanent tranquillity and delight.

Amid the greateſt carnal ſecurity, and whilſt ſinful man is endeavouring to

to ſilence this heavenly gueſt for ever, it will frequently ſtart from its ſlumbers, claim its native rights, and ſeek its native objects and employments. Hence proceed what are called, ſtrong convictions and rebukes of conſcience, of which the moſt obdurate offenders are very ſenſible, till by repeated reſiſtance, they become callous and dead to their ſalutary influence, fall under the power of "ſtrong deluſion, and "believe a lie." In this caſe, indeed, the Powers of CHRIST within them cannot appear, or be active for their deliverance: for they will not ſuffer them to be awakened; "they will "not come to CHRIST, that they may "have life."

But ſleeps not the BLESSED JESUS in other hearts than theſe, even in ſuch as have been already called out of their natural darkneſs "into his mar-

"vellous light," to whom he hath already manifeſted his awakened powers, who have been "renewed in the ſpirit "of their minds," "and created after "the Image of God in Righteouſneſs "and true Holineſs?" He ſleeps indeed, at times, in a ſpiritual ſenſe, even in the moſt virtuous and regenerate breaſts; and ſleeps, that they may awaken to a greater ſenſibility of their want of his Preſence, and cry more earneſtly to him for the Aids and Comforts of his Spirit.

He ſleeps in the boſom of his afflicted children, whilſt they are viſited with loſſes and calamities of various kinds, whilſt the world frowns upon them, whilſt its good things are ſnatched out of their poſſeſſion, and their deareſt friends are torn from their bleeding hearts. Theſe viſitations are ſent in Love—The great Lover of Souls ſeems to retire from his beloved Offſpring,

ſpring, and to withdraw his cheering Influence for the moſt benevolent purpoſes, that out of judgment may ſpring forth mercy, out of momentary diſtreſs pure and permanent delight, and that, by feeling the parent's abſence, the child may long more ardently for his return.

A black cloud, ſays a pious writer, makes the traveller mend his pace, and be more eager to get home; whereas a fair day, and a pleaſant road, ſteal away at once his time and his affections. Take it, then, as a mercy, thou afflicted ſoul! that, now and then, a few clouds intercept thy ſun; that, now and then, ſome troubles eclipſe thy comforts. Too many ſatisfactions at an inn, or upon thy journey, will be apt to make thee "forget thy Father's Houſe."

Take it as a mercy too, that thy SAVIOUR ſleeps within thee; that thou art

art thereby left for a while to feel the wretchedneſs of thy nature. Think not, that he is abſent; think not that thy heavenly powers are extinguiſhed: they live, and can live amid the furious tempeſts of affliction; and when nature is driven to the laſt extremity, they will awaken with new vigour, and accompliſh for thee an happy deliverance.

All this may yield ſome conſolation to a ſoul oppreſſed with calamity and ſorrow: but, alas! what is to be done in the hour of temptation? When corruption, and evil paſſions, demand an immediate indulgence; when "the "law in the members wars againſt the "law of the mind," and brings the ſoul into captivity; when the power of the temptation is ſo great, that it ſeems to carry the will, the deſires, and affections, along with it—under ſuch

ſuch circumſtances, where are we to look for Support and Conſolation?

Knoweſt thou not, O Chriſtian! that every nature has its will? that the earthly part, which the Apoſtle calls "the law in the members," and the Heavenly Nature, or "the law of the "mind," have each their reſpective wills, ſtrong and powerful?—When the former, therefore, would hurry thee into ſin, and thou feeleſt thyſelf carried headlong towards the object of thy unlawful deſires, as an horſe ruſheth to the battle—arreſt thy paſſion, for one moment—and examine the ſtate of thy mind. Art thou uneaſy and diſtreſſed under this ſinful impetuoſity? and even when thy natural will ſeems to go along with it, doſt thou not feel a deeper will, that ſecretly wiſhes it were otherwiſe, and prays for deliverance from the temptation? Believe me, thy JESUS is then preſent, though he

he ſeems "to ſleep" within thee. This conflict with nature, will make thee cry aloud to him that "is mighty to "ſave." Thy ſpiritual powers will be rouſed from their repoſe; the tempeſt will be quelled; a calm will be reſtored; and thou wilt then wonder at thine own fearfulneſs and want of faith.

When Julius Cæſar, in diſguiſe, was croſſing the ſea in a little bark, it was ſuddenly overtaken by a ſtorm, and well nigh ſwallowed up in the waves. Obſerving the pilot's courage begin to fail, he proudly called out—Why art thou afraid? Know, timid man! that Cæſar is thy paſſenger.

With infinitely greater propriety may the Chriſtian, in his darkeſt moments, addreſs this language to his ſoul: Fear not, O my ſoul! JESUS CHRIST is embarked with thee upon the tempeſtuous ocean. What though the windows of hea-

ven

ven be opened for a ſtorm; what though the fountains of the deep be broken up for a flood; what though thou art oppreſſed with deſertions from above, and afflictions from beneath; yet that GOD, who "ſitteth in heaven, and ruleth "over all," will not caſt away "his "own offspring;" "CHRIST in thee, "the hope of GLORY," will not ſuffer thee to ſink. The waves of ocean ſwell, only to ſet thee nearer to Heaven; the tempeſt roars, only to alarm thy fears, and to make thee awaken thy Maſter. Have confidence, then, in JESUS! Embarked with him, thou ſhalt eſcape all the perils of the Voyage of Life, and be landed ſafe on the ſhore of Eternal Bliſs.

DISCOURSE XIII.

On Regeneration.

Preached on Christmas-Day.

Isaiah, Chap. xl. Ver. 9.

DISCOURSE XIII.

ISAIAH, CHAP. xl. VER. 9.

"O ZION, THAT BRINGEST GOOD
"TIDINGS, GET THEE UP INTO
"THE HIGH MOUNTAIN! O JERU-
"SALEM, THAT BRINGEST GOOD
"TIDINGS, LIFT UP THY VOICE
"WITH STRENGTH; LIFT IT UP,
"BE NOT AFRAID! SAY UNTO THE
"CITIES OF JUDAH, BEHOLD YOUR
"GOD!"

NO perſon of true taſte and diſcernment can attentively peruſe the writings of the Prophets, and particularly thoſe of the Sublime Iſaiah, without being charmed with that peculiar dignity of ſentiment, and elegance of

expreſſion, by which they are ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed from all human compoſitions. Compared with theſe, what are the moſt towering flights of Attic or of Roman genius? They are as the feeble flutterings of ſome little feathered ſongſter, that can ſcarcely reach the topmaſt branch of the grove, to the ſoaring pinion of the king of birds, that hides himſelf aloft amid the blaze of day. That taſte and diſcernment, however, which enables us to feel and admire any maſterly ſtrokes of human elocution, being a natural talent, though capable of conſiderable improvement by art and education, is by no means ſufficient to lead us into the true Spirit of the Prophetic Writings: their majeſty of ſentiment, their elegance of expreſſion, are not derived from the ſources of nature or education, nor from the grandeur of the ſubjects upon which they ſpeak, but rather from the immediate Illumination of an Inſpiring DEITY.

"They

"They ſpake what they knew, and teſ-
"tified what they had ſeen." Heaven opened itſelf upon their inward ſenſes. By the light of a ſuperior world, they diſtinctly diſcerned the paſt, preſent, and future ſtate of things, in this lower orb: and what they ſaw, under ſuch an irradiating influence, they immediately expreſſed, in ſuch ſtrength and beauty of language, as muſt indeed excite the admiration of all, but can be underſtood and felt by thoſe only, who are ſo happy as to enjoy the ſame Heavenly Light with themſelves.

My text affords us an illuſtrious inſtance of the truth of theſe obſervations. Some of the moſt admired figures of rhetoric are here introduced, in an eaſy, natural, and yet exalted manner. The Prophet, enraptured with a view of the wonders and bleſſings to be opened in the approaching Kingdom of the MESSIAH, and which were to be outwardly vi-

ſible in the territory of Judea, calls upon the favoured land to proclaim the happy tidings to its utmoſt borders: "O Zion, "that bringeſt good tidings, get thee up "into the high mountain! O Jeruſalem, "that bringeſt good tidings, lift up thy "voice with ſtrength: lift it up, be not "afraid: ſay unto the cities of Judah, "Behold your GOD!"

In the marginal tranſlation, which is preferred by many commentators, we find the expreſſion ſomewhat varied. Inſtead of "O Zion, &c." we read, "O "thou, that telleſt good tidings to Zion, "&c. O thou, that telleſt good tidings "to Jeruſalem," &c. But notwithſtanding this variation in the reading, the Inward Senſe and Spirit of the words is exactly the ſame.

According to the marginal interpretation, the Prophet calls upon ſome herald or meſſenger, ſome Apoſtle or Evangeliſt,

to

to declare the glad tidings to Zion, to Jeruſalem, and the cities of Judah. According to the text he addreſſes himſelf, in a moſt noble Proſopopoeia, to Zion, or Jeruſalem itſelf, as the capital of Judea, and bids her publiſh, from her higheſt mountain, to all the cities of her territory, the glad approach of her Delivering GOD.

Taking the words as they ſtand in the text, I ſhall conſider them in that twofold ſenſe, which may be eaſily diſcovered by thoſe who are the leaſt converſant in the prophetic writings: by which I mean,

Firſt, Their external accompliſhment in the incarnation, nativity, perſonal appearance, and miniſtration, of the SON OF GOD, in Jeruſalem and the cities of Judah:

And ſecondly, Their internal accompliſhment in the hearts of all thoſe, who

have ſpiritually received the Tidings of his Goſpel.

I. With reſpect to the firſt or external ſenſe of this prediction, we find it literally accompliſhed in the tranſaction of this memorable day. Zion, Jeruſalem, and the cities of Judah, heard the joyful tidings. The voice of prophecy was fulfilled—the expectations of a Deliverer were anſwered—"The ſeed of "the woman" appeared to "bruiſe the "ſerpent's head." The "Shiloh" of the patriarchs preſented himſelf to their offspring.—"The Prophet, like unto "Moſes," came to demand audience of his "brethren"—"The Deſire of na-"tions" took poſſeſſion of his own Temple—The King MESSIAH eſtabliſhed his Spiritual Throne in the houſe of Iſrael—"A Child was born—A Son "was given—His Name is called Won-"derful, Counſellor, the Mighty GOD, "the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of "Peace"

"Peace"—In David's city was this Son of David born—"A Virgin did con-"ceive—A Virgin bare the Spotleſs "Babe—Emanuel, GOD with us"—GOD and man perſonally united in one Univerſal Redeemer—CHRIST, the Anointed of the Father—"JESUS," the Common Saviour, delivering his people, not merely from a temporal bondage, but from the deſpotic dominion of ſin, vice, and error—reſcuing the captive Iſraelites, not from the light burden of a Roman yoke, but from the more grievous tyranny of "powers and principa-"lities, and the rulers of the darkneſs "of this world."

By his Bleſſed Incarnation, this SON OF GOD became ſo intimately united to human nature, as to be a "Second "Adam," a ſecond Father, a regenerator of our lapſed race. He entered into that "body, which was prepared for "him," that, in it, he might perſonally

deſtroy the evil of our fallen nature, conduct it ſafe through all the difficulties, ſnares, and temptations, of an evil world, purify and exalt it, and at length, "ſeat it with Himſelf in his own Hea-"venly Places."

As GOD in Man, he was GOD to men. During his reſidence in our form, his Heavenly Powers were exerciſed in the relief of all their bodily, as well as ſpiritual complaints. His miracles were all miracles of love. They were all ſweet and ſalutary communications of thoſe Heavenly Powers to our weak and helpleſs race. Well, therefore, might the Prophet call upon "Zion, to get "up into the high mountain; and to "Jeruſalem, to lift up her voice, to lift "it up with ſtrength, and not to be "afraid" of any oppoſition from her adverſaries, whilſt ſhe publiſhed the glad tidings of Peace and Deliverance to all her

her inhabitants, and called upon them to "Behold their GOD."

They ſaw—they ſaw, indeed, their GOD AND SAVIOUR with their bodily eyes, walking in their ſtreets, converſing with them in public and in private, inſtructing them in the great myſteries of Divine Truth and Goodneſs; healing their ſick, cleanſing their lepers, raiſing their dead, comforting their afflicted, and adminiſtering pardon to their wounded conſciences. They ſaw the unexampled Meekneſs and Humility of his deportment; the Univerſal Benevolence that breathed in every thing he ſaid, and did. Their outward eyes were open to theſe Wonders of Love; but, "the "veil was not yet taken from their "hearts." The Babe was born in Bethlehem—The GOD appeared in the cities of Judah—But he was not yet born in their ſouls—He had not yet appeared to perform

perform his "Works of Wonder" in their darkened ſpirits. Thus it was, as the Evangeliſt tells us, that "he came "to his own, and his own received "him not."

This leads me to conſider the ſecond ſenſe, in which the words of the Prophet, in my text, are to be underſtood; viz. as internally accompliſhed in the Hearts of thoſe, who ſpiritually receive the good Tidings of the Goſpel.

II. "O Zion, that bringeſt good ti- "dings! O Jeruſalem, that bringeſt "good tidings!"—Whence, but from Zion, and from Jeruſalem, can any good tidings come? From ſpiritual Zion, from the Heavenly Jeruſalem; the "Je- "ruſalem that is above, and is the mo- "ther of us all;" the ſource, from which our heavenly natures are derived; the world, out of which we were originally

ginally created, and into which we are now, through CHRIST, redeemed?

Fallen, deeply fallen, the child of Heaven, the Son or Daughter of Zion, is ſhut up in a ſtrange nature, and a ſtrange world—the diſconſolate captive of an infernal prince, without any conſciouſneſs of her original dignity and illuſtrious birth! Like the conquered and captivated cities of Judah, ſhe has loſt her Liberty, loſt her Birth-right, loſt her Happineſs, loſt her GOD. But, behold! from yonder bleſſed Mount, Zion breaks forth in all the Majeſty of her Glory!—Hark! from yonder bleſſed Mount, "Jeruſalem lifts up her "voice, lifts it up with ſtrength, and "ſays unto the cities of Judah, Behold "your GOD!"—"Unto you is born "this day, in the city of David, a "SAVIOUR, which is CHRIST THE "LORD."

Unto

Unto thee, thou poor impriſoned Child of Light! is born a Deliverer, by whoſe Redeeming Influence, if thou wilt but open thine inward eye to behold him, thou thyſelf ſhalt be born again, reſcued from thine oppreſſor, and reinſtated in the poſſeſſion of thy Primeval Bliſs and Beauty! Bounds not thy boſom, hapleſs, happy mortal! at the tranſporting meſſage? Art thou not ſenſible of ſomething more than nature ſtirring within thee? And art thou not ready to call aloud to this hidden Child of Heaven in thy heart,

O ſpring to Light! Auſpicious Babe,
be born!

And here, let not the patrons of infidelity be offended at a Name—Let not the idle ſcoffers of the age pour forth their unhallowed wit againſt ſuch deep and awful truths, as they will not be

at

at leiſure to conſider and comprehend! Let not the doctrine of a NEW AND HEAVENLY BIRTH, though ſo egregiouſly miſtaken by ſome, and ſo groſsly corrupted by others, be looked upon as the dream of a viſionary, or the imagination of an enthuſiaſt! It is founded in the very nature of things, in the very nature of man: and what Divine Revelation teaches concerning it, true Philoſophy, and a real knowledge of the human heart, will abundantly confirm.

I call the converſion of a ſinner to GOD, a New Birth—The Scriptures call it the ſame: and I ſee no reaſon, why Chriſtians ſhould not prefer ſcriptural modes of expreſſion to any other. The word, it is true, has been ſadly perverted or abuſed by fanatics; but let us not, for this reaſon, reject the true and ſober uſe of it. Words ſignify but little: he who hath experienced a Spiritual Change of

of heart and life, may uſe what name he pleaſes; the reality is all that is contended for. That we ſhould have an inward, ſelf-evident ſenſibility of ſuch a change, is abſolutely neceſſary to our peace and happineſs, here and hereafter: and that we can obtain this in no other way, than that which the Prophet mentions, namely, by "beholding our GOD," is as certain, as this univerſally acknowledged truth, that All Goodneſs comes from GOD alone. The only queſtion, therefore, is, How, or in what manner, can I "behold my GOD," ſo as to produce this bleſſed effect in my ſoul? How am I to be born again? Or how is the Babe of Bethlehem to be born in my heart?—Nothing can be eaſier, nothing plainer and more obvious, than the anſwer to this important queſtion, where it is aſked with a ſincere deſire of ſpiritual information and improvement.

The

The New Birth, is neither more nor leſs than the Birth of Goodneſs within. Tell me, O mortal, whoever thou art! whether learned or illiterate, heathen or Chriſtian! doſt thou not, at times, feel a ſecret diſſatisfaction with thyſelf? Doſt thou not feel thyſelf proud, envious, fretful, angry, malicious, covetous, jealous, and implacable? There is not one amongſt us, that can preſume to ſay, he is at all times free from theſe odious paſſions. We need not call in our reaſon to convince us of their exiſtence and influence: we know them by a ſelf-evident ſenſibility. We know too, that they are accompanied with pain and anguiſh; that the more we indulge them, the more torment we feel; that they make us wretched here, and if not removed, muſt make us wretched hereafter. Now all this is what is called, in Scripture, "the old Adam, the man of ſin;" the child of wrath; the Cain, that murders

righteous

righteous Abel; the Eſau, that hates and perſecutes the ſpiritual Jacob; the reprobate nature, that is perpetually at war with the Elect of GOD within us.

On the other hand, do we not ſometimes feel a deſire of being delivered from theſe evil paſſions, accompanied with a ſweet ſenſation of Meekneſs, Humility, and Love? Alas! if we would but cheriſh this deſire, and theſe ſenſations, and reſiſt the former, which are unlovely and dangerous, we ſhould ſoon experience a real Birth and Life of GOODNESS in our ſouls. For when we feel thoſe gentle tempers and diſpoſitions prevailing, then we may depend upon it, we feel the Preſent DEITY, the GOD, whom the Prophet calls upon us "to behold:"

'Tis

'Tis the Divinity that ſtirs within us;
'Tis Heaven itſelf, that points out what
is good,
And wakes each latent virtue in our
breaſts!

Let us, therefore, "Behold our GOD," and behold him, till we look ourſelves, if I may ſo ſpeak, into his "Image and "Likeneſs." For GOD can manifeſt himſelf in no other way to his creatures, than by awakening in them an inward ſenſibility of his own Eſſential Goodneſs, Truth, and Love. The Pagan, or the Mahometan, who thus "beholds his "GOD," and faithfully attends to the improvement of theſe Heavenly Tempers in his ſoul, wants but the name of a Chriſtian; wants but to be told, that theſe Lovely Tempers are a Birth of Heaven, the Bleſſed Fruits called forth and brought to perfection by "the Sun of "Righteouſneſs, the Univerſal Saviour,

" the Light that lighteth every man that " cometh into the world."

How truly benevolent and ſublime does the great Goſpel Syſtem appear, when viewed upon this univerſal plan! How worthy of GOD! How ſuited to the real wants and exigencies of Man! And how contracted and illiberal, on the other hand, that ſectarian ſpirit, which hath ſo long divided the Chriſtian world, by which Faith hath been exalted at the expence of Love, and mere opinions of the head have triumphed over the fineſt feelings of the heart!

Receive it, therefore, my brethren, as a truth of the higheſt importance, that the NEW-BIRTH, or the Birth of Goodneſs and Heaven in the human ſoul, can only be effected by the Power of Him, from whom alone " every good " and every perfect gift cometh;" that it is the Proceſs of CHRIST, from his incarnation

incarnation to his aſcenſion, ſpiritually repeated within us; and that our ſalvation entirely depends upon our "beholding this GOD and SAVIOUR," manifeſting himſelf in all his amiable attributes within us, and by our wills chearfully co-operating with him in his GREAT WORK OF LOVE.

DISCOURSE XIV.

On St. Peter's Denial of Christ.

St. Luke, Chap. xxii. Ver. 61, 62.

The plan of the following diſcourſe is partly taken from a ſermon of Monſ. SAURIN, on the ſame ſubject; to whom the author is likewiſe indebted for many excellent obſervations, under each of the heads into which it is divided.

DISCOURSE XIV.

St LUKE, CHAP. xxii. VER. 61, 62.

"AND THE LORD TURNED, AND
"LOOKED UPON PETER; AND PE-
"TER REMEMBERED THE WORD
"OF THE LORD, HOW HE HAD
"SAID UNTO HIM, BEFORE THE
"COCK CROW, THOU SHALT DE-
"NY ME THRICE. AND PETER
"WENT OUT, AND WEPT BIT-
"TERLY."

TO be equally capable of forming and executing great and elevated deſigns, is the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of worldly heroiſm. It is unmoved at the proſpect of difficulties or dangers, and always prepared to en-

counter them with ſpirit and addreſs. Such likewiſe is the Heroiſm of the Chriſtian. The love of Virtue in its Eternal Source leading to Supreme Beatitude, is the object to which his affections aſpire. With fortitude and firmneſs he braves the aſſaults of his adverſaries, and celebrates his victories with this ſong of triumph: "Who "ſhall ſeparate us from the LOVE OF "CHRIST? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, "or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, "or peril, or the ſword?—Nay, in all "theſe things, we are more than Con-"querors, THROUGH HIM THAT LOV-"ED US."

Generous, ſublime, and Godlike, as this diſpoſition undoubtedly is, we muſt be careful, in the cultivation of it, not to ſuffer it to degenerate into raſhneſs or preſumption. Too many there are, who ruſh into danger, without weighing the conſequences, or proportioning

tioning their courage to their ſtrength; ſo that when the alarming criſis comes, they either meanly retreat, or inglorioufly ſink beneath its preſſure.

A remarkable inſtance of the truth of this obſervation, we meet with in the character and conduct of St. Peter. His boſom glowed with the warmeſt affection for his Maſter; and he was, upon ſeveral occaſions, the moſt forward in his expreſſions of zeal for his ſervice. When "he ſaw JESUS walk-"ing upon the water," he could not reſt till he had obtained permiſſion to come to him: but no ſooner did he find his feet ſinking beneath the waves, than his fortitude forſook him; and had it not been for that compaſſionate arm, that was inſtantly ſtretched forth to his relief, he muſt have ſhipwrecked his faith and his life together. In like manner, when his LORD was dragged to the palace of the high-prieſt, he

he followed without heſitation, deter-termined to bear him company, even to the Croſs: but no ſooner did he fix his eyes upon the wrathful Jews, the armed ſoldiery, and all the ſolemn preparations for judgment and death, than his conſtancy was overthrown; he endeavoured to ſkreen himſelf from the eye of vengeance by an ungenerous and impious falſehood; and had it not been for that Look of his SAVIOUR, which at once reproved and ſupported him, he would have broken every tender tie of the Diſciple and the Friend. "And the LORD turned, and "looked upon Peter; and Peter remem-"bered the word of the LORD, how he "had ſaid unto him, Before the cock "crow, thou ſhalt deny me thrice: "and Peter went out and wept bit-"terly."

In

In this paſſage of Scripture hiſtory, there are three things worthy our ſerious conſideration.

In the firſt place, We behold the moſt zealous of our LORD's diſciples, overcome by timidity, and yielding to the power of temptation.

Secondly, We ſee the BLESSED JESUS, manifeſting the ſweet, and all-conquering power of Divine Love, by a ſingle glance of his eye.

Thirdly, We behold the repentant diſciple recovering from his lapſe, and anſwering with tears to the expreſſive Looks of his Maſter.

I. Many circumſtances conſpire to heighten the guilt of the Apoſtle's conduct upon this occaſion.

The

The Evangeliſt tells us, that his reſolution was ſhaken, by the impertinence of an inquiſitive maid-ſervant. Had he been cited to appear before the Jewiſh Sanhedrim; had he been formally and legally called upon by his ſuperiors, to give an acconnt of the new doctrines he had embraced; or had that dreadful Croſs, to which he had promiſed to follow his Maſter, been erected at once before his eyes, and all the implements of death appeared in the hands of the executioners; one might have ſuppoſed, that ſuch an immediate view of inevitable danger would have diſturbed his ſenſes, and for a moment made him loſe ſight of his duty to his LORD, and of the ſupport and comfort he had been taught to expect from him. But not one of all theſe circumſtances appeared. The judges, wholly taken up with a vengeful proceſs againſt the Maſter, never once thought of the diſciple. A maid-ſervant firſt accoſts

accoſts him. Her words intimidate him: and all the terrors of the Sanhedrim and the Croſs are drawn up in dread array before his affrighted ſoul.

"Ah! where was now that gallant Faith, which made ſo glorious a confeſſion of this JESUS being the Son of the LIVING GOD? Where that bold promiſe, that though all ſhould be offended, and leave their dear LORD in diſtreſs, yet would he never be offended? Where that becoming reſolution, "Though I ſhould die with thee, yet "will I not deny thee in any wiſe." Where all that fire and intrepidity, which, but a little while ago, had ſingly engaged a whole band of armed men, in hope of reſcuing the LORD he now abjures? All loſt and forgotten, upon the ſilly ſurmiſes of a ſervant, without any formal accuſation brought, without a ſingle hand laid upon him."

Another circumſtance, that ſeems to aggravate his offence, is, that he was forewarned of his frailty; and ought, therefore, to have been conſtantly upon his guard. His Bleſſed Maſter had told him, in general terms, that "Satan deſired to "have him, that he might ſift him as "wheat." He had alſo very particularly aſſured him, that "that ſame night, he "ſhould deny him thrice." Such a ſolemn and ſalutary warning ſhould have engaged him to double his vigilance, that he might avoid a danger he had been ſo affectionately apprized of. When a temptation takes us by ſurprize, and we fall from a precipice, of which we were intirely ignorant, we may perhaps be worthy of compaſſion, rather than cenſure: but this appears not, from what hath been ſaid, to have been the Apoſtle's caſe.

Again: the extraordinary degree of light and knowledge, with which he had

had been favoured, is no ſmall aggravation of his guilt. For he had been, in a particular manner, prepared and ſtrengthened againſt the abaſement and ignominy which his Maſter was to endure. He had been a witneſs of his transfiguration on the mount; he had heard the heavenly voice, that ſpake from the cloud of glory; and well knew, that the great plan of human redemption could not be accompliſhed without the bloody proceſs of ſufferings and death. Beſides, his Maſter had cloathed him with the moſt diſtinguiſhed character: he had commiſſioned him to go and preach the Kingdom of GOD, adding this ſingular expreſſion of his eſteem and love: "Thou art Peter, and upon "this Rock I will build my church." And yet this honoured diſciple, honoured among the firſt with a commiſſion to publiſh the Goſpel of JESUS, was the very firſt to declare, that "he "knew not JESUS." "Nor was it enough

to

to diſſemble; he diſowned, and denied him: not content with a ſingle denial, he repeated it thrice; repeated it, after ſufficient ſpace for recollection; and at laſt bound the lie upon his ſoul, by ſolemn oaths and dreadful imprecations."

But the laſt, and blackeſt circumſtance of this whole tranſaction, was the time, at which St. Peter was guilty of this denial. The Bleſſed JESUS was, at that inſtant, manifeſting the tendereſt marks of affection for him and the whole human race. The cataſtrophe of the awful tragedy was at hand; the victim was bound; the Innocent for the guilty was prepared for ſlaughter. Every other diſciple was fled—no comforter at hand, but Peter, who had heretofore appeared the moſt zealous diſciple and friend. And yet, at this tender trying moment, his fidelity forſakes him. He ungratefully, unfeelingly, denies his LORD!—Thus weak and unſtable are all

all human virtues, when the mind of man reſts upon them alone, and ſeeks not for Superior Strength to ſupport it in the hour of temptation! "Let him, "that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed "leſt he fall." If the "cedars of Li-"banus" have been ſhaken, what have we not to fear for the "hyſſop on our walls?"

Let us not, however, leave the poor Apoſtle in this diſconſolate ſituation, but behold, in the ſecond place, the Bleſſed JESUS, manifeſting the all-conquering power of Divine Love, at once chiding Peter for his crime, and reſcuing him from the influence of the temptation, by a ſingle glance of his eye.

II. "And the LORD turned, and "looked upon Peter." O what unutterable things were ſpoken by that Look! what Eloquence beamed from thoſe Eyes! Never was language ſo piercing and pathetic! never did orator

deliver himſelf with ſuch addreſs and efficacy!

It was a look of anguiſh, and tender complaint: for we cannot doubt, that the denial of Peter embittered the Sufferings of his Maſter. The dearer the hand that ſtrikes, the more ſenſibly we feel the blow. The unkindneſs, the malice of an enemy, we are prepared to expect: but when we diſcover treachery, where we looked for fidelity; when, inſtead of an enemy, it is a boſom friend that wounds and betrays, nature can ſcarcely ſupport the anguiſh of the reflection. That the Jewiſh rabble ſhould appear in arms againſt the Innocent JESUS, was not ſtrange; they were ignorant of his perſon and character: that the Phariſees ſhould be clamorous for his crucifixion, was no more than what might be expected; for he had conſtantly borne his faithful teſtimony againſt their hypocritical practices: that the Roman

ſoldiery

ſoldiery ſhould enter into confederacy with the Jews againſt him, was eaſily accounted for; for they conſidered him as the enemy of Cæſar. But that Peter, who ought to have endeavoured to lighten the burden of his Maſter's Woe, ſhould contribute to increaſe it; that he, whoſe part it ought to have been to vindicate his LORD, ſhould thus cowardly deny him; that, inſtead of holding forth his hands to receive his tears, he ſhould lend them to aſſiſt his murderers; that every good purpoſe, every Heavenly ſenſibility, which had heretofore been awakened and cheriſhed, by a courſe of Divine admonition and inſtruction, ſhould at once diſappear, and leave the fallen ſoul in the hands of its ſpiritual adverſary—all this it was, that pierced the tender loving Heart of JESUS, and produced that look of affectionate reproof, with which he ſought to alarm his apoſtate diſciple and friend.

The look of JESUS was alſo a look of compaſſion and love. It is very obſervable, and worthy of our higheſt admiration, that in the midſt of his Sufferings, our Bleſſed REDEEMER's concern ſeems to have been, not for himſelf, but for the ſalvation of thoſe, for whom he endured them. He employed ſeveral days before his death in ſtrengthening his diſciples againſt the ignominy of the Croſs. In his addreſs to his Heavenly Father, he forgets himſelf, and prays only for them. Even during his conflict in the garden, he turns aſide to exhort his diſciples to watch, and pray, and arm themſelves againſt the aſſaults of the tempter: nay, even upon the Croſs he prays for his murderers, charitably aſcribes their guilt to their ignorance, and moſt fervently wiſhes them the joys of pardon and forgiveneſs.

Thus, in the inſtance before us, he is more affected by the ſtroke which the

the tempter had aimed at his diſciple, than with the ſevere torments that awaited himſelf. His look muſt have expreſſed ſome ſuch compaſſionate ſentiments as theſe: Simon, ſon of Jonas, I offer myſelf up a willing chearful victim for the Salvation of thy lapſed race. I paſs, with delight, through every narrow gate of torture, and of woe, that by my Suffering Proceſs, I may extinguiſh the wrath of nature, and bring every fallen ſpirit into a ſtate of heavenly Peace and Reconciliation with my FATHER. But when, at the very laſt ſtage of this proceſs, I behold one of my beloved diſciples rejecting theſe overtures of mercy, and refuſing to be cleanſed by that blood of the Covenant, which I am about to ſhed, my Paſſion becomes more embittered, and I am doubly crucified by thee.

Again, the "crowing of the cock" had been fixed upon as a ſignal, to ve-

rify the prediction of CHRIST, as well as to remind Peter of his promiſe. No ſooner did our LORD hear this harbinger of dawn, than he immediately "turned, and looked upon "Peter," as if to remind him of his fidelity, his proteſtations and oaths, to challenge his promiſe, or at leaſt to call forth his ſorrow for having failed. The deſired effect ſoon appeared. The Look, like the Word of JESUS, was "a two-edged ſword, "piercing even to the dividing aſunder "the ſoul and ſpirit." It opened the eyes of Peter; made him ſee and acknowledge his own weakneſs; and conſtrained him to give the glory to him, who had calmed and diſſipated his fears, revived his drooping courage, and rekindled his expiring zeal. "The LORD "looked upon Peter." Peter anſwered with his tears.

III. In

III. In theſe expreſſions of penitential ſorrow, we may diſcover many particulars worthy of our attention and imitation. The Evangeliſt relates, that he not only "wept, but wept bit-"terly." We are too apt to form very inadequate ideas of the deformity of ſin: it is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that we deceive ourſelves by thinking ſome ſuperficial exerciſes of piety ſufficient to cover or remove it. But, when we come to reflect upon the infinite diſtance at which it ſets us from the Source of Immaculate Purity; upon the deſtructive influence which it has upon our neighbours; and the deplorable ſtate of darkneſs and inſenſibility, into which we ourſelves are frequently plunged by it; we ſoon find, that our ſorrow cannot be too great, our contrition too deep and ſevere.

The readineſs of Peter's tears, is a circumſtance alſo, to which we ſhould do well to attend. His offence was ſudden: he was ſurprized into the ſnare. His recovery was as ſudden: it was inſtantaneous and effectual. The moment his Saviour looked upon him, "he wept." We juſtly ſuſpect the nobleſt reſolutions, when they regard not preſent, but future time. We cannot but tremble for the man, who puts off his repentance to a diſtant day. We tremble, leſt ſome unforeſeen accident ſhould intervene; leſt ſickneſs, or diſtraction, or force of habit, ſhould render him incapable of performing his reſolution of amendment.

Further, the precaution, which accompanied theſe penitential tears, deſerves alſo our notice. The Evangeliſt tells us, that "he went out." Not that he was aſhamed to confeſs his LORD in the very place wherein he had

had been ſo weak as to deny him: but he had now learned to diſtruſt his own ſtrength; his preſumption had already coſt him too dear.

If we would enquire why our devotions have hitherto been ſo unprofitable, why ſo many of our vows have been neglected or forgotten, ſo many reſolutions, promiſes, and proteſtations, vaniſhed into air, we ſhould find that it was owing to a neglect of this precaution. The true Chriſtian is induſtrious to fortify thoſe weak parts of his frame, with which a ſad experience hath made him acquainted. His very miſtakes and weakneſſes, in this reſpect, are made ſubſervient to his improvement in virtue and goodneſs. It was my intimacy with ſuch or ſuch a perſon, he will ſay, that proved fatal to my innocence; I will therefore break off all connexion with him. It was ſuch a ſcene of worldly pleaſure and diſſipation,

diſſipation, that firſt drew off my mind from ſerious things; I will, therefore, indulge myſelf with its follies no more. It was in the "court of Caiaphas, that "I denied my Maſter;" I will, therefore, inſtantly "go out."

Laſtly, In order to do juſtice to the ſincerity of Peter's repentance, we ought to conſider the ſalutary and permanent effects which it produced. And here I could wiſh, that cuſtom would permit me to add another text to what I have already enlarged upon: it is in the 21ſt Chap. of St. John's Goſpel, and the 15th Verſe. Our Bleſſed LORD, at his third appearance to his diſciples after his reſurrection, "ſaith unto Si-"mon Peter: Simon, ſon of Jonas, lov-"eſt thou me more than theſe? He "ſaith unto him, Yea, LORD, thou "knoweſt that I love thee. He ſaith "unto him, Feed my lambs."

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It is obſervable, that Peter anſwers not the whole of our LORD's queſtion. Had his Maſter, on any former occaſion, only ſaid, "Simon, ſon of Jonas, "loveſt thou me?" He would, doubtleſs, have replied with his uſual warmth, "Yea, LORD, thou knoweſt that I love "thee more than theſe." But his anſwer now is only, "Yea, LORD, thou "knoweſt that I love thee!' As if he had ſaid:

"Ah! my LORD, I feel moſt ſenſibly the import and alluſion of thy words. I well know, that thou wouldeſt humble the haughtineſs of my ſpirit, by recalling to my mind the ſad remembrance of that promiſe, which I preſumptuouſly made, and baſely violated—that "though all men ſhould "deny thee, yet would not I deny "thee." I am now conſcious, that I am leſs than the leaſt of all my brethren—I dare not promiſe any thing for

for myſelf. The effects of my paſt preſumption make me tremble for the future. I am not only humbled by a ſenſe of my own grievous fall, but by recollecting the examples of many illuſtrious ſaints, who have gone before me. Perhaps, like Job, I may "curſe "the day of my birth:" perhaps, like David, I may be guilty of adultery and murder: yea, perhaps I may again be tempted to deny my Maſter: and if thou ſhouldſt be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, LORD, how can I abide the pain of thy diſpleaſure? And yet, amid all my frailties and offences, I am perfectly convinced, that I love thee; I am convinced, that the moſt violent aſſaults of temptation can never extinguiſh an affection, which is in a manner incorporated with my very eſſence. My heart is deeply touched and inflamed, when I hear or reflect upon thy adorable virtues and perfections. I am charmed and tranſported with a view of that ſublime and benevolent

benevolent Syſtem of Redemption, which thou haſt publiſhed to our fallen race; and even amid the depth and darkneſs of apoſtaſy, I feel I know not what of uneaſineſs, and inward confuſion, which convinces me, poor frail creature that I am, that "the LORD "whom I have offended, is the LORD "whom I love."

Nor think, my brethren, that this humble acknowledgment of his weakneſs and guilt, rendered the affection of the diſciple of leſs value in the eyes of his Maſter. When we are intimately acquainted with the heart of a friend, and have experienced his ſincerity and devotion to us in a thouſand inſtances, we ſhould not, we could not ceaſe to love him, if by ſome unexpected temptation he was led to commit ſome offence againſt us, which he afterwards atoned for by the moſt poignant ſorrow and affliction. "GOD knows "whereof

"whereof we are made." His nature is unchangeable; and his nature is Love! "GOD is Love!" Our ſins alone ſeparate us from this Love; but they change not its nature, nor limit its duration. The moment we return to our GOD, he returns to us. No ſooner did Peter make this reply to his Maſter, "LORD, thou knoweſt that I love thee," than he immediately reinſtated him in his favour, and commiſſioned him to "feed his ſheep."

And O! what a noble compenſation did he make, by his future labours of love to the Church, for the reproach which he had brought upon it by his fall. Methinks I ſee him, on the day of Pentecoſt, bringing into the fold of CHRIST, thoſe ſheep, which his example might have led aſtray! His powerful and pathetic diſcourſe, like thunder and lightning, bears down all before him, working a ſtupendous change

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in thoſe very ſouls, who had beheld, perhaps, unmoved, a SAVIOUR bleeding on the Croſs; and forcing from them theſe ſtrong and expreſſive proofs of their conviction—"Men and bre-"thren, what ſhall we do?" Methinks I ſee him flying from Pontus to Galatia, from Galatia to Bithynia,, Cappadocia, and the provinces of Aſia, and from thence to Rome, marking his footſteps with the ruins of Satan's kingdom, demoliſhing the temples of falſe gods, and converting their idolatrous votaries to the "Truth, as "it is in JESUS:" exploits, highly worthy of that Chriſtian Heroiſm, whoſe firſt Labour of Love had been the converſion of eight hundred ſouls! Methinks I ſee him dragged from tribunal to tribunal, from province to province; at one time, ſummoned to appear before the incenſed Sanhedrim; at another, before a Roman judicatory; always reproached with the Ignominy of the Croſs, yet always

always confeſſing and preaching the Name of JESUS, and at laſt nailed to a Croſs himſelf, and expiring with this Language of Love upon his lips: "LORD! thou knoweſt all things, thou "knoweſt that I love thee!"

Let us now learn from this melancholy inſtance of Chriſtian Frailty, how weak and unguarded the beſt of men at times may be, and how little maſters of their own paſſions; how vain all confidence in human virtue, and how indiſpenſably neceſſary it muſt be, to depend wholly upon the ſtrengthening communications of Divine Grace. Let us beware of the very firſt ſuggeſtions of evil in our hearts; or, if we ſhould, through frailty, fall in the firſt inſtance, let us be extremely careful not to perſiſt and ſtrengthen ourſelves in iniquity. A taper ſuddenly extinguiſhed, if applied as ſuddenly to the flame, ſoon recovers its former light; but if ſuffered to cool and harden by delay,

cannot

cannot be rekindled without more time and trouble. One Internal Glance from the LORD of Light and Life, will be ſufficient to diſperſe the momentary cloud, which the firſt vapours of ſin form around the ſoul: but if we are not careful to catch this Precious Glance, the gloom will thicken, and we may wander ſo far out of our way, as to be in danger of loſing the Light for ever.

"How powerful is the Internal Look "of CHRIST!" ſays the excellent Queſnel. "Without it, nothing external can convert; with it, even the hardeſt hearts melt into tears. The cock had crowed—and yet Peter did not recollect himſelf, becauſe JESUS had not yet LOOKED UPON him. He caſts one Look upon his offending children, and the Work of Penitence commences, and is ſoon ſucceeded by the Work of Love! LORD evermore turn and look upon us with thoſe Eyes of Tenderneſs and Mercy, on which our ſalvation and eternal happineſs depend!"

DISCOURSE XV.

On Good-Friday.

Isaiah, Chap. liii. Part of Ver. 12.

DISCOURSE XV.

ISAIAH, CHAP. liii. Part of VER. 12.

"HE HATH POURED OUT HIS SOUL
"UNTO DEATH."

WELL might the noble Ethiopian, upon reading this remarkable chapter of Iſaiah, apply to Philip the Evangeliſt, whom Heaven had directed to meet him on a journey, to explain to him its myſterious import. "I pray "thee," ſaid he, "of whom ſpeaketh "the Prophet this; of himſelf, or of "ſome other man?" The queſtion ſhews him to have been poſſeſſed of a good natural underſtanding, though utterly un-

acquainted with the great Truths of Revealed Religion. Certain it is, that the Prophet hath entered ſo minutely into the character and conduct of the perſon whom he deſcribes, that the Ethiopian could not but ſuppoſe him ſpeaking of himſelf, or at leaſt of a man whom he had actually ſeen, and was intimately acquainted with. Philip ſoon reſolved his doubts; and his honeſt, though untutored heart, was chearfully opened to the ſalutary communications of Evangelical Truth.

Indeed, there is ſomething ſo lovely and luminous in the appearance of Truth, that nought but the miſts of paſſion and prejudice can intercept its rays, or obſtruct its efficacy on the human mind. Hence it was, that one of the moſt celebrated wits of the laſt century, after a life ſpent in the moſt ignoble purſuits, after having proſtituted his heart, his tongue, and his pen, to the moſt profligate

profligate and iniquitous purpoſes; was at laſt, when the hour of ſolemn reflection came, convinced of the error of his ways, the deformity and vanity of vice, the beauty of virtue, and the truth and reality of the Goſpel ſyſtem, by reading this very chapter, from whence my text is taken. Every part of the prediction it contains, was ſo circumſtantially verified in the perſon and ſufferings of the BLESSED JESUS, that he no ſooner felt the want of ſalvation in his heart, than he found the SAVIOUR, to whom alone he was to apply, and by whom alone it could be imparted.

The concluding verſe of the chapter contains a ſummary of the whole. The former part of this verſe refers to the glorious iſſue of the MESSIAH'S ſufferings: the latter part, and particularly the words which I have made choice of, evidently point to the occaſion of this day's ſolemnity, and expreſs the nature

and efficacy of thoſe ſufferings. "He "hath poured out his ſoul unto death."

When we realize to our minds the awful tragedy, that was this day exhibited on the trembling top of CALVARY; when we behold the Meek and Innocent JESUS nailed to a croſs, and attend to all the aggravating circumſtances that conſpired to heighten his diſtreſs, and to render his agony of the moſt complicated kind—we are ready to cry out, in the language of the lamenting Prophet, "All ye that paſs by, behold and "ſee, whether there be any ſorrow, "like unto his ſorrow!" Our hearts are entendered at the ſcene. The common ſympathy of human nature leads us to compaſſionate the Bleſſed Sufferer. We begin then to think, that our feelings are more than human; and that the love of CHRIST, and a genuine ſpirit of devotion, is the ſource from whence our tenderneſs proceeds. But let not paſ-

ſion

ſion uſurp the throne of Truth. Let not the Inſtincts of Nature be miſtaken for the Operations of Grace; or a mere attention to the ſufferings of humanity, conceal from our view the myſterious depths of REDEEMING LOVE.

Let us not imagine, that the "Death, "unto which he poured out his ſoul," was merely the diſſolution of his earthly body, and no more than ſuch a temporal death as you and I muſt ere long experience: millions of our ſpecies have ſuffered, and millions more muſt ſtill ſuffer, the ſame expiring agonies.—No—The death into which he entered, was the agonizing ſenſation, the horror unutterable, the blackneſs of darkneſs, which ſurrounds a ſpirit, that is ſhut out from the Light and Love of GOD. This is death in the true ſenſe of the word. Nought but ſuch a death could have made him cry out, in the moment of inſupportable diſtreſs, "My GOD, "my

"my GOD! why haſt thou forſaken "me?"

To the grand ſcheme of Redemption by JESUS CHRIST, this ſeemingly powerful objection hath frequently been made: Granting, that human nature is in a fallen and degraded ſtate, and that mankind, as univerſal experience abundantly teſtifies, are the ſlaves of evil and diſorderly paſſions, yet why could not all be ſet right by ſome inward and ſpiritual communications of Divine Light and Strength? Why was it neceſſary for the SON OF GOD to take upon him an human body, with all its weakneſſes, deſires, and temptations, continue for years in a ſuffering ſtate, and at length finiſh the melancholy proceſs by an agonizing death?

The anſwer is plain and obvious. It was neceſſary, in the firſt place, that "a body "ſhould be prepared for him," by which alone

alone he could become acquainted and connected with our nature in its preſent ſtate, and in and through which alone he could diſcover and overcome all its evils and diſorders. It was neceſſary, in the ſecond place, that ſuch a body ſhould be prepared for him, that he might therein exhibit to the view of all mankind, the mode and proceſs, by which each individual ſhould be enabled, through him, to overcome thoſe evils and diſorders in his own particular body.

Without ſuch a lively pattern and exemplar before our eyes of what was to be done and ſuffered by us, in order to partake of the benefits of Redemption, as well as of the power and ſtrength of him, who was to enable us thus to do and ſuffer, we muſt ſtill have remained under the ſame ignorance and darkneſs, with reſpect to the nature of our malady, and the means of our deliverance, as the Heathen were of old.

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By all that is ſaid, therefore, of CHRIST's ſuffering for us in the fleſh; of his ſacrifice upon the croſs; and the atonement, the redemption, and juſtification we derive from thence; we are to underſtand, that the ETERNAL WORD united himſelf with a fallen ſoul and body, that he might ſacrifice it to his HEAVENLY FATHER, that is, make it ſacred or holy, which he effectually did, by overcoming all the oppoſition that he met with from its fallen life, and at laſt ſuffering his enemies to ſhed the Blood of that Life, that the Heavenly and Divine Nature, which was within, might be reſcued from its bondage, and aſcend triumphant to its native element; hereby giving to men and angels a moſt convincing teſtimony of his uncontroulable power and dominion over all nature, as well as a moſt gracious aſſurance, that he will, in like manner, ſacrifice, redeem, or make holy, every ſon and daughter of fallen Adam, who will accept

cept of his gracious overtures of ſpiritual light and ſtrength.

Such ſeems to have been the nature and deſign of CHRIST's Incarnation, Sufferings, and Death. No angry GOD—no vindictive juſtice—no wrath in heaven, that refuſed to be appeaſed without the blood of JESUS, ſhed inſtead of the blood of ſinners—no arbitrary imputation of Adam's ſin, nor of CHRIST's Righteouſneſs—the wrath is in man alone, who refuſes to be at peace with his Maker—All is life and love on the part of GOD, and in the atonement of CHRIST—Heaven triumphing over hell—the powers of light over the powers of darkneſs—the good principle in man, over the evil principle—inward rectitude over inward depravity—" Chriſt in us the Hope of " Glory," deſtroying in us the works of the devil!

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From the manger to the croſs, this was the great Labour of Love which he was anxious to accompliſh. The awful tranſaction we this day commemorate, was but the laſt ſcene; the winding up and cataſtrophe of the diſmal tragedy—Or rather it was—fallen nature, though in league with all the powers of hell, vanquiſhed—nailed to the croſs—giving up the ghoſt—that out of that death it might riſe into a new life, and be re-admitted into its long-loſt Paradiſe!

Is this, then, a true picture of Chriſtianity? Look into your Bibles! Look into your hearts, and compare the features! If it be ſo, what becomes of the empty and inſignificant volumes of modern infidelity? Have not their authors been fighting with ſhadows; and taking that for Chriſtianity, which exiſts not in the Bible; but is only to be found in ſyſtems and comments of human invention? A Socrates, or a Plato, would have embraced

embraced, with rapturous gratitude, ſuch a Revelation as we are favoured with.

We miſtake the matter exceedingly, if we imagine, that True Religion is any thing leſs, than the communication of the Divine Nature to our ſouls. It is Heaven brought down to earth. It is the beauty of angels beaming through the veil of mortality. It is that ſweet intercourſe of Love, that ſubſiſts betwixt beatified ſpirits and their Maker, commenced in our hearts, whilſt we are pilgrims upon earth.

Look up to the Croſs—and drop a tear! It will be no more than the tribute of human ſympathy to exquiſite diſtreſs. It will not entitle thee to the Name of Chriſtian. It will give thee no intereſt, no fellowſhip, in the virtues of the BLESSED SUFFERER.

Look up to the Croſs again—look into it—penetrate the darkſome veil!—It is all black and horrible without—perfect humanity bleeding beneath the ſtroke—life iſſuing at every pore—and the ſpirit longing to burſt its tormenting priſon! Could angels weep, thou wouldſt behold angels weeping there; and waiting in dread and ſilent expectation of the awful iſſue. Could devils preſume to "hope "againſt hope," the infernal hoſts, that gather round the Croſs, might begin to flatter themſelves with the ſecurity of their kingdom, from the ſeemingly abandoned circumſtances of their moſt powerful oppoſer.

If, however, thou couldſt riſe for a few moments above the mere feelings of nature, and contemplate what is paſſing in the breaſt of this ſpotleſs victim, thou wouldſt behold the unerring Wiſdom, the unbounded Power, and eſſential Goodneſs of the Divinity, in ſolemn ſilence,

ſilence, working amid the ſtorm which men and devils raiſe, and with irreſiſtible energy penetrating to the very centre of a fallen world. Thus wouldſt thou be raiſed above the common proſpects of mortality. Thy tears would ceaſe to flow. The ſeeming ſufferer thou wouldſt find to be a real conqueror; and inſtead of "My GOD, my GOD! why haſt thou "forſaken me?" thou wouldſt hear that voice which ſhakes the foundations of nature, and makes the pillars of heaven tremble, crying out, in the Power of his Majeſty, and from the Center of his Glory, "I will ranſom them from death: I "will redeem them from the power of "the grave. O death! I will be thy "plague--O grave! I will be thy de-"ſtruction!"

And do you think, my brethren, that all this is a viſionary ſcene? Heaven forbid that it ſhould appear ſo to you or me! O that it might be realized, this

day, to every unexperienced heart! "Daughters of Jeruſalem! weep not for "me, but weep for yourſelves."

We generally come to the houſe of God on this day, expecting to have all the ſoft ſenſations of our nature excited, by a circumſtantial detail of the affecting tranſaction, which we are now called to commemorate. There is a chord of tenderneſs in our hearts, which ever vibrates at a tale of woe, and gives us a ſenſation, which we love to indulge, becauſe it is mournfully pleaſing. But this is not Divine Grace—this is not genuine devotion—the moſt vicious and abandoned have been known to feel it, as intimately as the moſt ſober and virtuous. How then are we to improve the preſent ſolemnity? Let us hear the bleſſed Apoſtle—"The grace of God "hath appeared unto all men"—for what purpoſe?—to teach us, "that, de-"nying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, "we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, "and

" and godly, in this preſent world:" or, as he ſpeaks in another place, that " the " world ſhould be crucified unto us, " and we unto the world."

Nothing can enable us to comprehend the myſtery of a Crucified REDEEMER, but a previous knowledge of our fallen ſtate, and a ſenſible conviction of the evil and diſorder, which ſin hath introduced into our nature. When we look up to the Croſs, therefore, let us, inſtead of indulging the ſenſations, which ſuch a ſcene commonly raiſes in the breaſt, " weep rather for ourſelves." Let us lament the miſerable depravity of our hearts, which requires ſuch an awful atonement: and let us never reſt, till we experience its bleſſed efficacy in our ſouls; till all pride, envy, covetouſneſs, and wrath, be totally extinguiſhed; and the meekneſs, humility, condeſcenſion and love of this Suffering LAMB OF GOD, be brought forth and exemplified in our life and converſation!

DISCOURSE XVI.

On the First or Spiritual Resurrection.

Romans, Chap. vi. Part of Ver. 4.

DISCOURSE XVI.

ROMANS, CHAP. vi. Part of VER. 4.

"LIKE AS CHRIST WAS RAISED UP
"FROM THE DEAD BY THE GLORY
"OF THE FATHER, EVEN SO WE AL-
"SO SHOULD WALK IN NEWNESS
"OF LIFE."

TO thoſe that have experienced the power of religion in their hearts, it frequently appears ſo plain and ſimple a thing, that they cannot but wonder, how it ſhould eſcape the attention and regard of the generality of men, and how they themſelves ſhould have continued ſo long ſtrangers to its nature

and influence. It requires no extraordinary acuteneſs of underſtanding, no painful or laborious reſearches, to penetrate into its adorable myſteries. It opens and manifeſts itſelf to the inward ſenſes of the human ſoul, in as real, diſtinct, and lively a manner, as the ſurrounding objects of the material univerſe do to the outward ſenſes of the human body. Nothing is wanting to evidence this reality of religion, but the calling forth into exerciſe, and directing the inward ſenſes to thoſe inward objects, to which they correſpond.

Every object of the world around, cannot equally and at all times engage our attention. Sometimes we are driven by the impetuoſity of paſſion to the purſuit of one object, ſometimes to that of another. The will, which is a free ſelf-moving faculty of our nature, turns itſelf with the whole tide of

of its affections, ſometimes into one channel, ſometimes into another. The preſent favourite object engroſſes the whole of its ſtrength, and leaves the reſt of its deſires idle and unſatisfied.

But let not vain man, naturally prompt to take up his reſt in outward things, and ever ready to plead, in excuſe for his folly, the urgent calls of bodily appetite, let him not pretend, that the GOD who made him, hath left himſelf without a witneſs; that he is not perpetually ſpeaking to him within and without, teſtifying, as well by the appearances and revolutions of outward nature, as by the inward operations of his own mind, that his ſupreme happineſs, the ſtate for which he was originally intended, can only be obtained by dying to that whole body of ſin, into which he is fallen, and riſing to that new and heavenly Life, into which he is redeemed by JESUS CHRIST.

The

The ſun ſets, and leaves the world in midnight darkneſs, that he may riſe with new ſplendour, and impart freſh life and vigour to the natural world. The ſpring riſes with all her beauty, health, and fragrance, from the death of winter. The germe, or principle of vegetative life, breaks forth from the dead corrupted maſs that is ſown in the earth, and riſes into a beautiful plant. The inſect, that died to all outward appearance, and was ſhut up in its pendant grave, comes forth into a new life, and clothed with its reſurrection body, takes its flight into regions, to which in its former groveling ſtate it could never have ſoared.

The moſt ſuperficial obſerver of outward nature, can readily diſcover and acknowledge this wonderful analogy that manifeſts itſelf through all her works. Every thing teems with life: and yet life, in the preſent ſtate of things, can only proceed

proceed from death. Every object around us, therefore, continually preaches the ſame great doctrine, in which we are fully inſtructed by the tranſaction of this day. CHRIST's Reſurrection is repreſented throughout Scripture as an earneſt of our own. The only way to ſecure to ourſelves an happy reſurrection, is by "dying to ſin, "and living unto righteouſneſs." "Like "as CHRIST was raiſed up from the "dead by the Glory of the Father, "even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in new-"neſs of life."

Our ſpiritual reſurrection to a new life, is therefore neceſſarily preparative to our future reſurrection to Glory. And my text aſſures us, that they are both brought about by the ſame means, even by the "Glory of the Father." I ſhall not take up your time at preſent, in enumerating the ſeveral remarkable circumſtances, in which our

LORD's

LORD's Reſurrection is figuratively expreſſive of that great ſpiritual change, which is called, in my text, "Newneſs "of Life." I think it will be more profitable to endeavour to explain to you the nature of this important change, and to give you ſuch a deſcription of its ſalutary effects upon the ſoul, as will enable you to judge, upon enquiry, whether this "Glory of the Fa-"ther" hath yet been revealed to your inward ſenſes.

A mere hiſtorical Chriſtian will ſatisfy himſelf with poring over the Scripture account of CHRIST's Sufferings, Death, and Reſurrection; and provided he has a clear idea of the outward tranſactions in his head, he is little anxious about any thing further. He reads them over as any other piece of entertaining hiſtory, without feeling himſelf much intereſted in their conſequences. But as we never can be ſaved, but by paſſing though the ſame ſuffering proceſs with our BLESSED REDEEMER,

REDEEMER, we ſhould never read any part of the hiſtory of his Life, Sufferings, Death, and Reſurrection, without making an immediate application of it to our own ſouls, that ſo we may be able to judge, whether "the ſame mind be in us, that "was alſo in CHRIST JESUS;" or in the words of my text, whether, "as "CHRIST was raiſed up from the Dead, "by the Glory of GOD the FATHER, "we alſo walk in Newneſs of Life."

O Chriſtian! the Reſurrection of thy SAVIOUR will ſtand thee in no ſtead, unleſs it be realized in thy heart! Indulge me, then, with thy cloſeſt attention, whilſt I attempt to mark out ſome of the glorious ſteps, by which this ſalutary proceſs is carried on in our natures.

Thoſe, who deny the great doctrine of original ſin, betray a manifeſt ignorance

norance of the Holy Scriptures, and of their own natures. The language of the former we find to be continually this, that "in Adam a have died; "that by one man's tranſgreſſion ſin "entered into the world; that the "thoughts of men's hearts are only "evil continually; that we were con- "ceived in ſin, and born in iniquity; "that in our fleſh dwelleth no good "thing; that the carnal mind is en- "mity againſt GOD; that our iniquities "are more in number than the hairs of "our head; that there is none of us "that doth good, no not one."

The language of nature correſponds with theſe declarations of Scripture. The voice of all our earthly paſſions confirms theſe revealed Truths. Even thoſe, who were deſtitute of an outward revelation, felt and lamented the prevalence and dominion of their corruptions. And our own experience, if we would be ingenuous,

ingenuous, muſt lead us to confeſs, that we are naturally prone to evil, and averſe to goodneſs.

Pure and ſpotleſs we came into this world, ſay ſome ſuperficial enquirers into human nature; and all the evil we learn or practiſe, is from the power of example. But when did this example begin? What mortal firſt introduced it into the world? Where did he learn it himſelf? Surely it muſt have proceeded from his own evil heart. So that after all our doubts, we muſt go back to the ſame ſource that the Scripture points out to us, and fix the origin of evil in man, in the diſobedience of the firſt father of the human race, from whom the fatal infection has ſpread through all his hapleſs poſterity. For the hiſtory of paſt ages informs us, that the world was ever wicked as it is now; and that the violence of human paſſions hath ever been the ſpring of all the diſ-

orders

orders and confuſions, in which kingdoms, families, and individuals, have been involved.

Vain and ſpecious reaſonings will always be overborne by facts. Look at the innocent and immaculate babe, as ſome would call it, in the arms of its mother. Where is the meekneſs, gentleneſs, and heavenly ſerenity of unfallen nature? Is not its viſage marked with the fire of indignation, pride, envy, jealouſy, covetouſneſs, and all thoſe other furious and unlovely paſſions, which manifeſt themſelves upon every little provocation through life? Whence can this proceed? Not from the force of example—for it cannot yet diſcern betwixt good and evil, ſo as to make its choice. It ſprings, therefore, from that root of evil, which it brings with it into the world. As the little ſtranger becomes acquainted with the world, he finds objects enough to gratify every corrupt

corrupt paſſion. Theſe paſſions too often "grow with his growth, and "ſtrengthen with his ſtrength." Pleaſure prepares her bait for the early ſeaſon of his life; Ambition follows to entice his riper years; and Avarice ſpreads her ſnares to captivate the weakneſs of his old age. Yea, it ſometimes happens, that the human ſoul is enſlaved, at one and the ſame period, by the united influence of theſe earthly paſſions.

Is not all this matter of fact, and daily experience? a corrupt nature, meeting with a corrupt world, yielding readily to its ſollicitations, and greedily ſwallowing its envenomed baits! The diſeaſe, how powerful!—the contagion, how univerſal! O for a remedy as powerful, as univerſal, to counteract its baleful influence, and reſtore life and health to the diſordered ſyſtem!—Surely, there is "Balm enough in Gi-

"lead" to accompliſh the cure! Surely, there is efficacy enough in the Blood of JESUS to waſh out the crimſon ſtain! Surely, there is power enough in his Reſurrection, to raiſe the dying ſinner to "Newneſs of Life." And if there be power and ability to extricate miſerable man from the bondage of an evil nature; ſurely, there cannot be want of will in HIM, whoſe Name is Love, whoſe Eſſence is Love, who dwelleth in Love, and whoſe Grace, far more univerſal than the light of the ſun, penetrates the center of the moſt hardened heart; ſo that nought can hinder its healing influences from having their effect, but the human will obſtinately turned againſt and rejecting them. This is a truth, which, as a miniſter of the Goſpel of Peace, I am bound to publiſh, whilſt the Word of Truth aſſures me, that "GOD is not willing that any "ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould "come to repentance."

I ſolemnly

I ſolemnly appeal to the conſcience of every perſon in this aſſembly, whether he has not, more than once, yea frequently and continually, felt the ſtrivings of Divine Grace in his ſoul. Haſt thou not, O ſinner, frequently experienced within thy ſoul a ſecret oppoſition to favourite ſinful inclinations and purſuits? Hath not ſomething whiſpered to thine heart, in a retired moment, ſome ſuch truths as theſe—Why doſt thou ſpend, in vain and unprofitable pleaſures and engagements, a life, that ſhould be employed in ſecuring the future welfare of thine immortal part? Knoweſt thou not, that this body, which thou art ſo anxious to pamper and indulge, muſt ere long be laid breathleſs in the grave? Why then ſo proud, ſo fond of being honoured and admired by beings frail and periſhing as thyſelf? Why art thou ſo envious of another's beauty, fame, or poſſeſſions? Why is thine anger kindled at every trifling accident? Why rankles in thy breaſt that malicious

cious diſlike of thy neighbour, becauſe he hath, or thou thinkeſt that he hath, offended thee? Why art thou ſo greedy of gain? Why doſt thou grind the face of the poor, withhold the wages of the hireling, and extort more than is juſt from thoſe with whom thou haſt dealings? Why art thou ſo anxious to become great, or rich; to leave an immenſe eſtate behind thee, purchaſed by iniquity, at the expence of thy ſoul, and the ſufferings of many helpleſs brethren, whom thy bounty might have relieved? Why burns thy breaſt with an unlawful flame, which nought, perhaps, but the apprehenſion of worldly ſhame and cenſure, reſtrains thee from indulging? In a word, why do "the "luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the "eye, and the pride of life," engroſs thy whole time and attention?

None of you can deny, but that you have frequently felt ſuch remonſtrances

ſtrances as theſe; that the Bleſſed Monitor within hath often thus ſhewn you to yourſelves; and that if you have perſiſted in an ungodly courſe of life, it hath not been for want of repeated warnings. This Bleſſed Monitor is no other than the "Glory of the "Father" ſhining into the darkneſs of nature, and diſcovering to you your corruptions, to engage you to overcome or forſake them. Your turning to, and acceptance of this Glory, is your ſpiritual reſurrection to Newneſs of Life. Your reſiſting it, is your condemnation here; and, if you perſiſt in ſuch reſiſtance, muſt be your perdition hereafter.

The firſt appearance of Divine Grace upon the ſoul, is like the early dawn of morn, juſt opening to us a faint imperfect view of our inward ſtate. If we embrace this chearing light, and walk therein, it will "ſhine more and

" more unto the perfect day." It is the peculiar property of the Fire of Heaven, to purify as well as enlighten; ſo that a ſinner need not be diſcouraged by a view of his own corruption, but rather bleſs GOD for the diſcovery. Sin is a moſt dangerous rock, on which we ſhould inevitably be ſhipwrecked, if Divine Light did not point it out, and Divine Love aſſiſt us to eſcape it.

On the other hand, this ſpiritual reſurrection is checked or prevented by thoſe, who ſhut their hearts againſt the firſt Beams of Grace, and fly from the Light, becauſe it renders them uneaſy and diſſatisfied with themſelves—Their minds are ſo far enlightened by it, as to ſee, that their preſent mode of life, their idle converſation, their amuſements and diverſions, their ſecret ſins of pride, envy, and love of pleaſure, are quite inconſiſtent with that ſtill, retired,

retired, meek, humble, ſelf-denying life, which the Religion of JESUS demands. Loth, therefore, to abandon their favourite purſuits, they ſhun the light that ſhews them their folly, and ruſh into darkneſs; that, by hiding themſelves from themſelves, they may ſin in peace. Thus, by chuſing darkneſs rather than light, they keep themſelves in a ſtate of death, and ſuffer not the power of CHRIST's Reſurrection to "raiſe them up to New-"neſs of Life." They prefer the vanity of time, to the riches of eternity; the pleaſures of ſenſe, to the moſt pure and perfect ſpiritual delights; the life of brutes, to the the life of Angels.

But I hope better things of you, my brethren—The Light ſtill ſhines around you, if you will but open your eyes to ſee it; if you will but forſake the darkneſs to enjoy it. Remember, theſe two principles are incompatible: there is no communion betwixt them—no re-

conciling Heaven and earth, CHRIST and Belial. Worldly pleaſure and Devotion cannot ſubſiſt together. Diverſions have no connexion with the Two Sacraments: they are a breach of Baptiſmal engagements; and repugnant to that Spiritual Communion, which we profeſs to recognize and renew in the LORD'S SUPPER—May GOD deliver us, therefore, from the dominion of a worldly ſpirit, and render us conformable to his dear SON, that ſo "the ſame mind "may be in us, that was alſo in CHRIST "JESUS; and that, as he was raiſed "up from the dead by the Glory of "the Father, even ſo we alſo may walk "in Newneſs of Life!"

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XVII.

On a Future Resurrection.

Preached on Easter Day.

Ezekiel, Chap. xxxvii. Ver. 3.

DISCOURSE XVII.

EZEKIEL, CHAP. XXXVII. VER. 3.

"AND HE SAID UNTO ME, SON OF
"MAN, CAN THESE BONES LIVE?
"AND I ANSWERED, O LORD GOD,
"THOU KNOWEST!"

BUT a very few weeks ago, the whole vegetable world, wrapt in the cold embraces of winter, laid to all appearance motionleſs and dead. The beautiful verdure that adorned the meadows and fields, was dried up and withered away. Plants, fruits and flowers diſappeared; and every tree of the foreſt, ſtript of its leafy honours, ſtood like a life-

a lifeleſs trunk! Had any of us, at that ſeaſon, put this queſtion to a ſkilful naturaliſt—Son of man, can all this dry and withered herbage, theſe leafleſs trees and plants, ſhoot forth again and live?—from experience and obſervation, he would doubtleſs have anſwered, without the leaſt heſitation, in the affirmative; but not with the ſame humility and modeſt reference to the Knowledge and Goodneſs of the Moſt High, which diſtinguiſhes the Prophet's anſwer in my text. According to the courſe of nature, he might ſay, all the powers of vegetation will begin to operate upon the approach of ſpring: and a warm ſun, gentle breezes, and refreſhing rains, will call forth the latent principle of life from every tree and plant, and herb and ſeed: the fields, and meadows, and gardens, and foreſts, will ſmile with a beautiful reſurrection, and all the ſenſes will be regaled with an infinite variety of colours, forms, and odours.

But

But whence doth this reviving change in nature proceed? whence, but from the God of nature? The Source of Life, and Beauty, and Perfection, is hidden from the naturaliſt of this world: he can only ſpeak from his obſervations of the workings of outward nature. But the Divine Naturaliſt, whoſe inward eye is opened and illuminated by the Light of another world, can ſee, and contemplate, and adore that Univerſal Principle of Life, which is perpetually manifeſting himſelf to every object of univerſal nature, according to its capacity or aptitude to receive his enlivening beams: and therefore, the anſwer of ſuch a Divine Philoſopher to every queſtion, that is put to him relative to the world of nature or of Grace, will be invariably the ſame—"O Lord God, thou knoweſt!"—that is to ſay—All things are in thy hand, and at thy ſovereign diſpoſal, thou Maker and Governor of the univerſe! Separated

rated from thee, and thy life-giving, life-preſerving energy, the whole creation of beings, material as well as intelligent, muſt remain in a ſtate of death --and nought but the ſending forth of thy genial ray and animating breath, can call them forth into a new life, and make them riſe from their beds of darkneſs arrayed in robes of beauty, and aſpiring to perfection.

Wrapt into prophetic viſion, Ezekiel tells us, in the beginning of this chapter, that "the hand of the LORD was "upon him, and carried him out in "the Spirit of the LORD, and ſet him "down in a valley which was full of "bones—and cauſed him to paſs by "them round about; and behold, ſays "he, there were very many in the open "valley; and lo, they were very dry— "And he ſaid unto me, Son of man, "can theſe bones live? And I an- "ſwered, O LORD GOD, thou know- "eſt!—

"eſt!—Again he ſaid unto me, Prophe-
"ſy upon theſe bones, and ſay unto
"them, O ye dry bones! hear the word
"of the LORD—Thus ſaith the LORD
"GOD unto theſe bones—Behold, I
"will cauſe breath to enter into you,
"and ye ſhall live!"

Though this remarkable viſion was exhibited to the inward eye of the Prophet, and its comfortable import communicated to him, and declared to relate primarily to a merciful viſitation of the houſe of Iſrael, and their approaching deliverance from the diſtreſſes of captivity—yet, as no prophecy is of private interpretation, but every individual of the human race is alike concerned in its important contents; ſo it is with much truth and propriety, that ſpiritual men of every denomination have conſidered the viſion before us, as a moſt awful and inſtructive repreſentation of the two-fold reſurrection of human nature,

ture, expreſsly revealed in Scripture: namely, its firſt and ſpiritual reſurrection from the death of ſin; and its ſecond reſurrection, or the final releaſe of the body from the bands of death and the impriſonment of the grave, and its reunion with the ſoul for ever.

The firſt, or ſpiritual reſurrection, was the ſubject of the preceding diſcourſe. To the ſecond, or the reſurrection of the body, my text ſeems more particularly to refer; even to that grand and awful period, when, as the Apoſtle ſublimely expreſſes it, "the trumpet ſhall "ſound, and the dead ſhall be raiſed "incorruptible, and we ſhall be changed; "when this corruptible ſhall put on "incorruption, and this mortal ſhall put "on immortality;" when "the dry "bones" ſhall once more be cloathed with ſinews and fleſh; when the breath of the Almighty ſhall reanimate the lifeleſs

lifeleſs duſt, and every riſen body ſhall be joined in an indiſſoluble union with its reſpective and immortal partner.

The proceſs of the ſufferings and death of the BLESSED JESUS, in the body that was prepared for him, we have already attended to, and ſeen the indiſpenſable neceſſity of a like proceſs in our own body. It is as neceſſary to the purification of our ſouls, and final reſurrection of our bodies, as the decay of the huſk or ſhell is to the ſpringing forth of the ſmall germe or life of the ſeed; or as fire is to the conſumption of the groſs compacted dark parts of the ſubſtance upon which it preys, that its pure and more ſpiritual parts may unite with their kindred element.

The reſurrection of our LORD's body is a ſufficient proof, without any other, of the neceſſity of our reſurrection: we muſt paſs through the ſame grave and gate of death that he did, before we

can enter into eternal life; with this only difference, that our material part muſt ſee corruption, which his did not.

And here let no one call in queſtion the truth of our bodily reſurrection, or attempt to argue, that if this be the caſe, our happineſs will be delayed to the great day of judgment—No—the heavenly nature of the adorable JESUS, was in Paradiſe at the very time that his earthly body lay in the ſepulchre—But we read not of his aſcenſion into the Heaven of Heavens, and his ſeſſion at the right hand of his Father, till forty days after the reſurrection of his outward body. Hence it is, that our Church has been careful, particularly to expreſs her belief of theſe important points, in that excellent ſervice which we uſe at the burial of the dead.

" We

"We commit the body of our bro-
"ther, or ſiſter, to the ground; earth
"to earth, aſhes to aſhes, duſt to duſt,
"in ſure and certain hope of the reſur-
"rection to eternal life, through our
"LORD JESUS CHRIST, who ſhall
"change our vile body, that it may
"be like unto his glorious body, ac-
"cording to the mighty working,
"whereby he is able to ſubdue all things
"unto himſelf."

And, indeed, it is but reaſonable to conclude, that, when the whole ſyſtem of outward temporal nature ſhall undergo its laſt and final change, by the purifying fire of the Moſt High, our earthly bodies, which will ſtill form part of that ſyſtem, ſhould partake of the glorious change, and be brought back with the reſt of nature to their primitive ſplendour and purity.

Again, in one of the collects of the ſame ſervice, we pray in this manner: "Almighty GOD, with whom do live the ſpirits of them that depart hence in the LORD, and with whom the ſouls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the fleſh, are in joy and felicity; we give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleaſed thee to deliver this our brother, or ſiſter, out of the miſeries of this ſinful world, beſeeching thee, that it may pleaſe thee, of thy gracious goodneſs, ſhortly to accompliſh the number of thine Elect, and to haſten thy kingdom; that we, with all thoſe that are departed hence in the true faith of thy Holy Name, may have our perfect conſummation and bliſs both in body and ſoul, in thine Eternal and Everlaſting Glory, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD."

Now

Now in this collect, though it is plainly implied, that the ſouls of the Righteous are in the hand of GOD, and "drinking of thoſe rivers of pleaſure" that ſurround his Throne, yet it is as plainly aſſerted, that till the general reſurrection there will be no conſummation or completion of bliſs, both in body and ſoul.

"To-day thou ſhalt be with me in "Paradiſe," ſaid our BLESSED LORD to the penitent thief—We need not doubt but the gracious promiſe was punctually fulfilled; and the very moment the Heaven-born Spirit had eſcaped from its tortured body, the whole Paradiſiacal world was opened upon its ſenſes, and it ſat down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob in as ample and glorious a manifeſtation of the kingdom of GOD, as its preſent nature and capacity would admit.

Away, then, with that idle and unſcriptural notion of the quieſcent ſtate of the human ſoul, betwixt death and reſurrection.—No ſooner was the rich man ſummoned by the king of terrors to leave his voluptuous and polluted body, than in a moment "he lifts "up his eyes in torments." No ſooner was poor Lazarus releaſed from his crazy, tottering, and diſtempered earthly frame, than he was tranſported in an inſtant to Abraham's boſom—"My deſire is to "depart, and to be with CHRIST," ſaid the Bleſſed Paul—"Whilſt I am pre-"ſent in the body, I am abſent from "the LORD—I would fain be abſent "from the body, that I may be pre-"ſent with the LORD."—The full meaſure of retribution is doubtleſs reſerved for the judgment of the Great Day—the final ſeparation of the wheat from the chaff, of the righteous from the wicked, will not be accompliſhed till that awful hour, when all "that

"are

" are in the graves ſhall hear the " voice of the SON OF GOD, and ſhall " come forth; thoſe that have done " good to the Reſurrection of Eter- " nal Life, and thoſe that have done " evil to the reſurrection of damna- " tion." The identity of their perſons will doubtleſs be aſcertained; and men and angels will be witneſs to the equity of the Divine determinations.—

And does it ſeem ſtrange to thee, O man! that GOD ſhould raiſe the dead? Who raiſes the corn in thy fields? Who bids the fair flower ſpring up in thy garden from a ſeed that corrupts and dies? Nay, who called thyſelf from the duſt, breathed into thy noſtrils the breath of life, and made thee to become a living ſoul?

Call in reaſon to thine aid—Poor, blind, benighted fallen reaſon, will be as much at a loſs to account for

one, as for the other of theſe wonders of the Moſt High. Not a ſingle object in the world around thee can thy reaſon fully unfold—the minuteſt inſect, the worm on which thou trampleſt, contains a myſtery too deep for thine underſtanding to comprehend—wilt thou, then, call in queſtion the Omnipotence of thy Creator? Humble thyſelf rather in the duſt before him—acknowledge thine own blindneſs and preſumption—and, if thy reaſon ſhould aſk thee, "Can theſe bones live?" anſwer with the meekneſs and modeſty of the Prophet, "O LORD GOD! thou know-"eſt:" alas! I cannot ſolve the difficulty—my LORD and GOD alone can tell me.—Impoſe ſilence upon thy pride and prejudices; hearken with ſimplicity to what thy GOD will anſwer thee concerning this matter—and thou wilt ſoon hear his voice in his outward revelation, correſponding to his voice within thy breaſt, and ſaying to thy ſoul—

"Behold,

" Behold, I will cauſe breath to enter " into theſe dry bones, and they ſhall " live"—live for ever!

O joy unutterable! glad tidings to the friends and followers of the conquering JESUS! The earth quakes—the ſtone is rolled away from the door of the ſepulchre—and humanity riſes triumphant in the perſon of its REDEEMER. For us, and for our Salvation, hath this God-man burſt the ſtrong barriers of the grave, paſſed through the gates of death, and opened the chryſtal portals of the World of Light. None of human kind are excepted—all are invited to follow this great Captain of their Salvation—to none is an entrance refuſed, but to thoſe who wilfully and ungratefully ſlight the invitation, and prefer the ſhort, fleeting, and unſatisfying pleaſures of their earthly and fallen life, to the ſolid permanent joys of their Redeemed nature.

Alas!

Alas! we are all, by nature, in as bad a ſtate as "the dry bones of the "valley"—Nothing can deliver us from this ſtate, or reanimate our lifeleſs forms, but the breath of the Almighty—the ſame Power that created, can alone redeem—and this redemption can be accompliſhed in no other way, than the BLESSED JESUS hath exhibited to our view in his own awful proceſs. We muſt "die unto ſin, before we can live unto "righteouſneſs." A deep conviction of the folly, vanity, and guilt of our fallen nature, and a full confidence in the All-ſufficiency of Redeming Love to reſcue and deliver us, are the two indiſpenſable requiſites for this great work. The holy Heavenly Life and Spirit of the Immaculate Lamb of GOD muſt be revealed in our hearts: an intimate union and communion muſt be formed betwixt us and our Life-giving Saviour: we muſt dwell in CHRIST, and CHRIST in us:

we

we muſt be one with CHRIST, and CHRIST with us—and then, and then only, will theſe "dry bones live," and riſe, and reign with their Deliverer for ever.

The food of this ſpiritual life, the real and only nouriſhment of this new-riſen, heaven-born nature within us, is the Body and Blood of our dear Saviour, verily and indeed taken and received by the real Chriſtian at all times, and in all places, but particularly, and, above all, in the Bleſſed Sacrament of his own inſtitution.

To this heavenly banquet, therefore, let us draw nigh with faith, not truſting in our own righteouſneſs, but in the manifold and great mercies of GOD in CHRIST—A ſenſibility of our own weakneſs and unworthineſs, is our beſt preparative for a worthy participation. The Holy, Heavenly, Healing Blood of

of CHRIST, is the richeſt balſam for our wounded hearts! The Maſter of the feaſt is even now waiting to bid us welcome to his table. "The Meek "ſhall eat, and be ſatisfied"—they ſhall ſeek, and find, and diſcern the LORD's Body there; and their ſouls, revived and ſtrengthened by freſh ſupplies of Divine Light, and Life, and Love, ſhall flouriſh, and bloſſom, and bring forth fruits unto Life Eternal!

DISCOURSE XVIII.

On the Epistle for the Sunday after Ascension-Day.

1 St. Peter, Chap. iv. Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

1 St. Peter, Chap. iv. Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

" The End of all Things is at
" hand: be ye therefore so-
" ber, and watch unto Pray-
" er. And above all Things
" have fervent Charity among
" yourselves: for Charity
" shall cover the Multitude
" of Sins. Use Hospitality one
" to another without grud-
" ging. As every Man hath
" received the Gift, even so
" minister the same one to
" another, as good Stewards
" of the manifold Grace of
" God.

" GOD. IF ANY MAN SPEAK, LET
" HIM SPEAK AS THE ORACLES
" OF GOD; IF ANY MAN MINI-
" STER, LET HIM DO IT AS OF THE
" ABILITY WHICH GOD GIVETH;
" THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY
" BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS
" CHRIST; TO WHOM BE PRAISE
" AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND
" EVER! AMEN.

THE Aſcenſion of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, which we have lately commemorated, was the laſt ſtep of that Redeeming Proceſs, by which he triumphed over all the evil of fallen nature, opened the gates of everlaſting life, and took his ſeat at the Right Hand of the Majeſty on high. " The " heavens therefore," as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, " have received him till the time " of the reſtitution of all things;" that

is

is to ſay, till his mediatorial office is completed, and till all things are brought into that ſituation, which had been determined between him and his Father, in the counſels of Eternal Wiſdom.

Our church, in the whole courſe of her excellent ſervice, ſeems to have been mindful of every part and circumſtance of this great and glorious proceſs. The collect for this day, at the ſame time that it reminds us of our LORD's exaltation, calls upon us to pray for thoſe gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, the extraordinary manifeſtation of which we are taught to commemorate at the approaching feſtival.

The epiſtle for the day, which I have juſt read to you, ſeems to have been wiſely ſelected to point out this admirable leſſon of inſtruction, that as our BLESSED REDEEMER had finiſhed "the work" in his own perſon, which his "Heavenly

" Father had given him to do," nothing now remained, but that every one of that fallen race, whom he came to redeem, ſhould, in their own perſons, lovingly co-operate with this Univerſal SAVIOUR, in their own particular redemption. This exhortation is compriſed in ſeveral precepts, which are introduced and enforced by one of the moſt awful and alarming motives, that could poſſibly have entered into the mind of the Apoſtle. " The end of all things is " at hand," ſays he. Surely the bleſſed Apoſtle could not have been deceived; and yet, 1700 years have paſſed, ſince theſe words were written, and the end is not come. Nevertheleſs, the words were literally true at that time; they have been ſo ever ſince; and they are ſo now.

" The end of all things is " indeed " at " hand "—We need not pore over the comments of ancient or modern Divines, to

to diſcover when theſe words will be fulfilled. We need not look into the vain calculations of thoſe, who have endeavoured to aſcertain the exact period of time, when the kingdom of anti-chriſt ſhall be overthrown, and CHRIST himſelf ſhall come to receive his own children into a new heaven and a new earth. With reſpect to every one of us that are here aſſembled, "the end of all things "is at hand"—Some of us, within a very few years, and ſome, perhaps, within a very few days, may behold the curtain drop, and ſhut out every ſcene of temporal nature from our view.—"The heavens and the earth will then "paſs away with a mighty noiſe; the "ſun will be darkened, and the moon "turned into blood; the ſtars fall from "their orbits, and the powers of heaven "will be ſhaken."—Death, judgment, heaven, or hell, will then be realized to our ſouls—"He that is holy will then "be holy ſtill, and he that is filthy will

"be filthy ſtill." The mortal life of man will terminate the ſeaſon of Divine Grace; and his hopes or his fears, his happineſs or his miſery, will be confirmed by his laſt expiring breath.

And is this awful period, indeed, ſo near at hand? Doubtleſs it is—and its arrival is frequently ſudden and inſtantaneous.—The king of terrors often knocks at the door, when the maſter of the houſe is by no means prepared for the awful viſit. Nay, he frequently paſſes by the habitations of age, infirmity, and diſtreſs, and thunders forth his tremendous ſummons in the ears of the young, the gay, and the robuſt. Even piety and virtue cannot ſkreen their votaries from his unerring ſhafts, but he ſometimes ſnatches away the moſt amiable patterns and examples of both, to awaken the attention, and chaſtiſe the careleſſneſs and ſecurity of their friends and neighbours.

If theſe things are ſo, tremble, thou thoughtleſs ſinner, that art unprepared to die! With reſpect to thee, "the end "of all things is at hand"—"To-day, if "thou wilt hear the voice of Truth, O "harden not thine heart!" Hear it from the mouth of his own bleſſed Apoſtle! and learn from hence the only true preſcription that can render thee unappalled at the approaches of death—"Be "ye therefore ſober, and watch unto "prayer."

Sober? ſays the decent, delicate moraliſt—an excellent injunction, and worthy the pen of an Apoſtle!—Intemperance is, in every reſpect, unbecoming a rational creature; and of all kinds of intemperance, drunkenneſs certainly degrades him moſt, and reduces him below the level of his fellow-brutes. So far, thou ſayeſt well—But the ſobriety here ſpoken of by the Apoſtle, has a deeper root than this, and far more

branches than thou haſt enumerated. Poor ſuperficial obſerver! didſt thou but ſee into the depth of thine own heart, thou wouldſt find thyſelf ſubjected to far more than one ſpecies of intoxication.—Thou lookeſt with contempt upon the drunkard; and art ready to cry out, in all the pride of philoſophic abſtinence, "Stand off from me, for I am holier "than thou!" But thou perceiveſt not, that thou thyſelf art under the power of a more dangerous kind of intemperance—that thou art intoxicated with pride, ambition, envy, covetouſneſs, luſt, or wrath. Know then, that the ſobriety here recommended to thee, as a preparation for thine approaching end, includes every grace and virtue that ſtands oppoſed to theſe odious vices. To be ſober, is not only to be temperate with reſpect to eating and drinking, and other bodily gratifications; but it is to be meek, humble, benevolent, and charitable. The good Apoſtle, therefore, proceeds

ceeds to tell thee, in what manner reluctant nature may be ſubdued, and Grace and Goodneſs ingrafted, and made to flouriſh within thee.

"Watch unto prayer," ſays he: that is, pray, and watch over thy prayers—But who does not pray? Every man and woman in the world, ſtrange as it may ſeem, are perpetually at their prayers. They do not all pray to the ſame God; and too few, I fear, pray to the true God. Whatever object our wills and affections are centered upon, this is our God, and to this we offer up our moſt hearty devotions. Every paſſion of fallen nature has its numerous votaries, and their deſire of gratifying it is their conſtant prayer. But let us once be convinced, that theſe paſſions are in themſelves evil, and that the gratification of them muſt terminate in our miſery; and, in conſequence of this, let us once be led to look up, with a longing reſtleſs

deſire, to a Superior Power, to aid us in the conqueſt of theſe paſſions, and to call forth holy, pure, and heavenly affections in their ſtead. This deſire, thus operating, will form a true and moſt effectual prayer. Our utmoſt vigilance will be exerciſed to have it accompliſhed. We ſhall not only watch againſt the ſly inſidious attacks of the enemies of our peace; but we ſhall alſo watch for the bleſſed increaſe and improvement of thoſe Divine Powers and Virtues, by which alone we can be enabled to ſubdue them.

Sobriety, watchfulneſs, and prayer, if I may uſe the moraliſt's diſtinction, comprehend the duties we owe to ourſelves. But, to ſpeak in the language of a Chriſtian, they are the evidences of that internal conviction which the Grace of God hath wrought in our hearts, by which we have diſcovered our own indwelling corruption, and earneſtly deſire and

and ſtrive, under the ſame Grace, to obtain an effectual deliverance from it.

The Apoſtle next recommends the practice of certain duties to our brethren, as the ſureſt and moſt infallible criterion of the ſincerity of our Chriſtian profeſſion. "And above all things," ſays he, "have fervent charity among yourſelves; "for charity ſhall cover the multitude "of ſins."

How wretchedly hath this text been miſapplied, and how frequently hath the apoſtle been made from thence, to inculcate a doctrine diametrically oppoſite to the very genius and ſpirit of the Goſpel? Many a poor mortal hath, in his laſt moments, ſung a requiem to his ſoul, and vainly anticipated an imaginary paradiſe, becauſe, in the courſe of his life, or by his laſt will and teſtament, he hath beſtowed conſiderable charities upon the poor; falſely and unhappily concluding, that

that ſuch charities as theſe will cover, or aboliſh, the multitude of his ſins.

We are told by another of the Inſpired Apoſtles, that "we may give all our "goods to feed the poor, and yet not have "true charity." The charity therefore mentioned in both theſe places, muſt be very different from alms-giving, which is only one of its ſhoots or branches. It is no other than the love of GOD ſhed abroad in our hearts by his Bleſſed Spirit, inſpiring us with an Heavenly Principle of Love to our brethren; a love that is fervent, univerſal, impartial, like the Source from whence it flows, dealing its ſmiles and favours all around!

Conſidered with reſpect to the objects upon whom it is exerciſed, it may be truly ſaid to "cover a multitude of ſins," becauſe it looks, not to their vices, but to their real wants and neceſſities. It throws a mantle

a mantle over every human weakneſs and corruption, and ſuffers no part of our nature to be expoſed, but its indigence and diſtreſs.

If this interpretation be not approved, and it ſhould ſtill be thought, that it is our own ſins, and not thoſe of our neighbours, which are thus covered by charity: I could agree even to this conſtruction. For wherever Divine Love enters the breaſt, it excludes every falſe and ſinful love: it conſumes, in its own heavenly flame, every thing that is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh; and thus covers and extinguiſhes corruption for ever.—Not that alms-giving is by any means to be neglected—it cannot be ſo, where there is true Love, which will ever operate in this way, when objects preſent themſelves; for the very next precept of the Apoſtle, grounded upon this, includes alms-giving.

"Uſe

"Uſe hoſpitality one to another," ſays he, "without grudging." The moſt perfect pattern of Divine Philanthropy extended his univerſal beneficence to the bodies, as well as the ſouls, of thoſe whom he came to redeem: and though he had neither ſilver nor gold, yet ſuch as he had, he freely and generouſly imparted. His heart was open to receive every repentant ſinner, and his hands were ſtretched forth to relieve their infirmities. Hoſpitality implies in it every office of tenderneſs, ſympathy, and benevolence, which man can ſhew to man. But be it remembered, my brethren, that none but the real Chriſtian can exerciſe this virtue without grudging; that is to ſay, without ſome ſelfiſh feeling, ſome avaricious reluctance, or ſome proud and ungenerous ſelf-applauſe. To do good for Goodneſs ſake, for the love of Goodneſs, without the leaſt view to any ſelfiſh gratification, is the ſure and only evidence of pure

Charity

Charity—And to ſhew how unreaſonable, as well as unchriſtian it is, to act from any other motive or principle; the Apoſtle reminds us in the next verſe, that all the Goodneſs we have, and all the power of doing good, is not our own, but is the free and gracious gift of GOD himſelf.

" As every man hath received the gift, " even ſo miniſter the ſame one to ano- " ther, as good ſtewards of the manifold " Grace of GOD. If any man ſpeak, " let him ſpeak as the oracles of God. " If any man miniſter, let him do it as " of the ability which GOD giveth."

The pride of man, in his unregenerate ſtate, cannot brook to be told this Evangelical Truth. He claims every thing as his own, and is not willing to give his Maker credit for a ſingle bleſſing which he enjoys. Hence the rich man glories in his riches, and the mighty man in his ſtrength;

ſtrength: the philoſopher prides himſelf upon the depth of his underſtanding, and the diſcoveries he has made by the power of his own penetrating genius: and, ſhall I ſay it? even the Divine himſelf, improperly indeed ſo called, is deſirous that his hearers ſhould applaud his diſcourſes, as the fruits of his own ſpiritual diſcernment. Whereas, in truth, my brethren, all ſpiritual, as well as temporal bleſſings, all inward as well as outward advantages, are no other than ſo many different manifeſtations of the Manifold Grace of GOD; they are freely diſpenſed to us from his munificent hands; they are not ours—we are but ſtewards, bound to diſtribute them according to the ability we have received from GOD.

Thoſe, therefore, who are favoured with outward gifts, and called to the miniſtration of the temporal bleſſings of GOD, ſhould never fail to reaſon in this manner—

manner.—What have I, that I have not received? The good providence of GOD hath loaded my coffers with worldly treaſure—for what?—not ſurely to conſume it in the gratification of thoſe evil deſires, which I brought with me into the world, and which, if not ſubdued, muſt plunge my ſoul into exquiſite miſery. No—the GOD of Love hath thus bleſſed me, that I might be the means of diſtributing his bounty to others. My boſom glows with the very thought! As a ſteward of the Moſt High, I am determined, by his Grace, to deal out his own treaſures with a liberal, not a grudging hand; to ſeek the melancholy retreats of indigence and woe, to revive the fainting ſpirits of the hungry, and raiſe a ſmile of chearful gratitude upon the countenance of the ſick and afflicted. My hoſpitable door ſhall be open to the ſtranger, and my face ſhall never be turned from the cries of the poor!

In like manner, thoſe, who are favoured with ſpiritual gifts, ſhould conſider themſelves merely as ſtewards, entruſted with them for the edification of the family of CHRIST. "There are diver-"ſities of gifts, but the ſame Spirit." The ſame ſun and air impart their ſweet and ſalutary influences to the various flowers and herbs with which your gardens are ſtored. Each has its particular virtues, colours, and odours. Each contributes its ſhare to your pleaſure or profit. But there is no grudging, no envying of each others gifts. The ſweet, but humble violet, envies not the ſuperior height and fragrance of the lilly. The richly variegated tulip looks not down with contempt on the pale and modeſt hyacinth. Each pours the gifts it has received with undiſtinguiſhing liberality all around. And if there is no paſſing pilgrim to enjoy thoſe gifts, they return them to the ſun

and

and air, from whence they received them.

O what leſſons of wiſdom may the devout Chriſtian learn from every plant in his garden! "Go, and do thou likewiſe," is the language in which they ſilently addreſs him. Thou miniſter of JESUS! freely give what thou haſt freely received. "If thou ſpeakeſt, ſpeak as "the oracles of GOD."—ſpeak according to the revelation with which thou haſt been favoured. The Oracle of GOD muſt firſt declare his will in thy heart, or thou canſt not declare it with truth to thy brethren. "If thou doſt miniſter, "do it as of the ability which GOD "giveth."—Not a ſingle good thought haſt thou of thine own! Art thou bleſſed with any communications of Divine Truth, diſpenſe them chearfully as coming from GOD, through thee. Envy not the ſuperior gifts of thy brethren. Thy ſmaller humbler graces are as neceſſary

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to the perfection of the myſtical body, as thoſe of an higher and more illuſtrious kind. Bleſs GOD for the gifts of others, as readily and ardently as for thine own. It is thus that "GOD will, in "all things, be glorified through JESUS "CHRIST."

The Glory of GOD, in its fulleſt and higheſt manifeſtation, is in the Perſon of "his own Eternal Son, GOD OF GOD, "LIGHT OF LIGHT." But he is glorified in us and by us, when the Image of his Son is born and formed in our hearts; when the reality of this New-Birth, this living principle of goodneſs and truth is manifeſted to ourſelves as well as others, by ſuch an inward unfolding of heavenly ſenſibilities, and ſuch an outward practice of heavenly virtues, as hath been recommended to you, from the words of the Apoſtle in my text.

"Glory,

"Glory, Praiſe, and Dominion," therefore, we aſcribe to GOD in the only true and proper ſenſe of theſe expreſſions, when we ſuffer his glory to be diſplayed, his praiſe to be proclaimed, and his dominion acknowledged, in the temple of our hearts. In this only true and proper ſenſe, may we all be enabled to aſcribe "this glory, praiſe, and dominion, "to Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, ONE "GOD, bleſſed for evermore." Amen!

DISCOURSE XIX.

Preached on Whitsunday.

Galatians, Chap. iv, Ver. 6.

DISCOURSE XIX.

GALATIANS, CHAP. iv. VER. 6.

" AND BECAUSE YE ARE SONS, GOD
" HATH SENT FORTH THE SPIRIT
" OF HIS SON INTO YOUR HEARTS,
" CRYING, ABBA, FATHER!"

" THE natural man receiveth
" not the things of the Spi-
" rit of GOD, for they are fooliſhneſs
" unto him; neither can he know
" them, becauſe they are ſpiritually
" diſcerned." Scripture is beſt interpreted by Scripture; and were it cuſtomary to make uſe of two ſeparate texts for the ſubject of a diſcourſe, I

ſhould not heſitate, on the preſent occaſion, to fix upon thoſe which I have juſt read to you, as they ſo evidently explain and illuſtrate each other. They doubtleſs refer to two different natures, lives, or principles, which man brings with him into the world. The Apoſtle could never have told his Galatian brethren indiſcriminately, that they were "Sons," and that for this reaſon "GOD "had ſent forth the Spirit of his SON "into their hearts;" if they had not been poſſeſſed of an heavenly nature or principle, through the Redeeming Grace of CHRIST, by virtue of whoſe mediation alone they could properly be called "Sons." On the other hand, the ſame Bleſſed Apoſtle could never have told his Corinthian brethren indiſcriminately, that "the natural man receiveth not the "things of the Spirit of GOD, neither "can know them;" had there not been another principle or nature in man,

man, oppoſed to the celeſtial ſeed of life, and incapable of being wrought upon by the Divine Spirit. To this latter principle, called the natural man, "the things of GOD are," and muſt ever be, "fooliſhneſs." Had we brought no other principle with us into the world, there could have been no more poſſibility of our being redeemed, and raiſed up into a ſpiritual and heavenly life, than there could be for a plant to ſpring forth from the ground, without its proper ſeed having been ſown there.

It is a truth, therefore, on which our eternal Salvation reſts, that we all have within us, according to the language of Scripture, "an incorruptible ſeed "of the Word of GOD;" and that though our "natural man," which we receive from the firſt Adam, (under which we are born into this world "children of wrath, dead in treſpaſſes "and ſins") "receiveth not the things of "GOD;

" GOD; though they are fooliſhneſs " unto him, and he cannot know them, " becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned;" yet GOD was graciouſly pleaſed, by his own free gift in JESUS CHRIST, to impart to our firſt progenitor, and, through him, to all his poſterity, " a " ſeed of the woman, a ſpiritual Jacob, " a Son of the free woman, an Heir of " the promiſe, to bruiſe the ſerpent's " head," to overcome the ſpiritual Eſau, to caſt out the ſon of the bond-woman, and to receive the promiſed inheritance. It is by virtue of this free gift of Heaven to fallen man, that he is put into a capacity of being redeemed. It is by virtue of this, that he can ſay, with the Apoſtle St. John, " Behold " what manner of love the Father hath " beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be " called the ſons of GOD." It is by virtue of this, or as my text expreſſes it, " Becauſe we are ſons," that GOD hath

" ſent

"ſent forth the Spirit of his SON into "our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!"

Having thus pointed out to you, from Scripture, the foundation which JESUS CHRIST himſelf hath laid in every man's heart, for carrying on the great and ſalutary purpoſe of Redemption; let us attend to the manner, in which this proceſs of Love is accompliſhed, which my text expreſſes, by "GOD's ſending "forth the Spirit of his SON into our "hearts."

I ſhall not at preſent dwell upon the narrative of that awful and glorious tranſaction, which gave riſe to this day's ſolemnity. I ſhall only obſerve, that the whole of it muſt be ſpiritually fulfilled within our ſouls, or we cannot derive the leaſt advantage from it. A mere hiſtorical faith in the event itſelf, as recorded in the Scriptures, will ſtand us in no ſtead.

The

The Holy Ghoſt, co-eternal and co-eſſential with the Father and the Son, the author and giver of life, eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son, and eternally ſhedding abroad his life-giving influence throughout the whole univerſe of being—this "Holy "Ghoſt" himſelf muſt "come upon "us, this power of the Higheſt muſt "overſhadow us; like a ruſhing mighty "wind," he muſt enter into, and fill the temple of our hearts; call forth the hidden Seed of Heaven, into a new Birth; enable it to breathe, and live, and act, to "ſpeak with other tongues," to ſeek its PARENT GOD, and to ſound forth the praiſes of its Redeemer. The beſtial and diabolical nature, the "man of "ſin, the ſon of perdition" the reprobate, will fly before this wind of Heaven, whilſt the "Elect, the called, "the choſen," the ſanctified nature, will be thereby awakened, cheriſhed, and ſtrengthened.

"He

"He HATH ſent the Spirit of his Son "into your hearts." The Apoſtle does not ſay, he WILL ſend. The very moment a child is born into this world, the air of this world is ready to meet it, that its animal life may be ſupported by the inſpiration and reſpiration of this air. And can we think, that GOD, who hath provided thus liberally and univerſally for the ſupport of our animal life, hath not alſo provided as liberally and univerſally for the ſupport of our ſpiritual life? Certainly he hath. His ſpirit is perpetually moving upon the face of all fallen nature. It is a truth to be met with in almoſt every page of our Bibles, and which our church hoth adopted in every part of her excellent liturgy, that the Real Chriſtian can only be ſupported by the immediate perpetual inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt. I could enumerate many collects and other parts of our ſervice, which we never repeat, without profeſſing

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feſſing to believe the doctrine of immediate inſpiration. Nor have we any more reaſon to be offended at the word "immediate," when applied to our ſpiritual life, than when it is ſaid, that our animal life depends upon the immediate and conſtant inſpiration of the air around us. The awakening and bringing to full maturity the Child of GOD in the human heart, is the bleſſed operation of the Holy Ghoſt, whom we properly call, in one of our Creeds, "the "Lord and giver of life," and whom GOD "ſends forth into our hearts" for this very purpoſe.

But ſome perhaps may be ready to ſay—If there be, indeed, ſuch an offſpring of the Divinity in every man's breaſt, and if the Holy Spirit is ſo univerſal in his operation; whence is it, that every man in the world does not feel this Heavenly inſpiration, and in conſequence

conſequence of it, live and act as a Child of God? This queſtion may be fully and ſatisfactorily anſwered from Scripture itſelf. "Light is come into "the world—but men loved darkneſs "rather than light, becauſe their deeds "were evil"—"Ye will not come unto "me, that ye might have life." Leaving all ſyſtems of Divinity, and comments upon theſe words, I think common ſenſe will direct us at firſt ſight to their plain and obvious meaning. They certainly eſtabliſh the Univerſality of the Spirit's operations, and at the ſame time give the only true reaſon of their frequent failure of ſucceſs.

Still, however, it may be aſked, ſuppoſing this to be true, in what manner does this Univerſal Spirit make himſelf known, and how are his influences felt and diſtinguiſhed in the mind of man? My text ſolves this queſtion:

queſtion: "God hath ſent forth the "Spirit of his Son into your hearts, "crying, Abba, Father!"

And where is that human heart, in which this cry of the Bleſſed Spirit hath not at one time or other been heard? The vicious hear it as well the virtuous, the ſinner as well as the ſaint; with this difference indeed, that the latter attend with pleaſure and delight to its Heavenly Voice, and ſuffer the the Heavenly Offspring within them to cry through the Spirit to its parent, for its proper food and nouriſhment; whereas the former, though they cannot but hear, yet ſeek to drown its gentle voice, by turning to the clamours of earthly paſſions, and ſuffering the tender plant of Paradiſe to pine away for want of its true Spiritual ſuſtenance.

Ah

Ah, thoughtleſs ſinner! that art perpetually "ſpending thy money for that "which is not bread, and thy labour "for that which ſatisfieth not!" the pampering of thy beſtial and diabolical nature, engroſſes thy whole attention and ſolicitude; "What ſhall I eat, "what ſhall I drink, and wherewithal "ſhall I be cloathed?" how ſhall I obtain ſuch or ſuch an object, which avarice, ambition, or ſenſuality, hungers after? what method ſhall I take, to have the calls of envy, malice, or reſentment, fully gratified?—Theſe are the anxious cares and purſuits, in which a worldly ſpirit is perpetually involving thee: and thus it is, that thou art inſpiring its poiſonous breath, which will ere long contaminate thy whole frame, and plunge thee into irremediable woe! Happy thou canſt not be: enjoyment in every inſtance mocks thy moſt ſanguine expectations, and diſappointment treads cloſe upon the heels

of worldly hope. Still, however, thou purſueſt the phantom—and neglecteſt the only real object that can give thee peace here, and glory hereafter.

Cruel and relentleſs! to cruſh the tender plant—to deny it the ſuſtenance, which Heaven hath prepared—to ſtifle the infant Angel in its birth!—O heart of ſtone! why art thou not pierced by its voice?—"Abba, Father!" it cries—or fain would cry—releaſe me from this bondage of earth and hell!—unite me to thyſelf!——Enliven——ſupport——and give me the dominion over this reprobate nature, in which I am entombed! —No—thou replieſt—"Away with him, "away with him,—crucify him!" And crucify him thou doſt, whenever thou reſiſteſt thoſe powerful calls and warnings, which are given thee by ſickneſs, by affliction, by the miniſtration of GOD's Word, and the various diſpenſations of his Providence.—Turn thee,

thee, alas! ere it be too late; ere the Light within thee, by thy own obſtinate reſiſtance of its beams, be turned into darkneſs; ere the breath of the Divine Spirit ceaſeth to move over the Deep of thy fallen nature; ere the diſſolution of thine outward body leaves thy naked ſpirit deprived of the Light and Air of Heaven, condemned to dwell with congenial ſpirits of darkneſs, in unextinguiſhable flames!

But who is yonder penſive mourner, whoſe reclined head, and ſad dejected countenance, ſpeak more than common anguiſh and diſtreſs? "Be-"hold, I am vile!" methinks I hear her ſay—"I was conceived in ſin, "and born in iniquity—The imagina-"tions of my heart are only evil con-"tinually—My ſins are more in num-"ber than the hairs of my head! "Ungrateful rebel againſt the GOD of

"Love! who ſhall deliver me from "this body of ſin and death?"—Peace, thou child of ſorrow!—who told thee theſe melancholy tidings? Who told thee thou waſt vile, ungrateful, and rebelliuos? It was the Spirit of Truth himſelf. But he did not tell thee this, to diſtreſs thee beyond hope—it was only to ſhew thee thine own weakneſs, and the power of thine adverſary. Ceaſe, therefore, from the workings of thine own diſturbed imagination--Thou wilt find a Friend within thee, whoſe mild and gentle voice will ſpeak peace and comfort to thy ſoul--The diſtreſs that thou haſt felt, and doſt now feel, proceeds only from the awakened deſire of the Child of Heaven within thee--It hath long been crying, "Abba, Father!" though thou haſt not yet underſtood its plaintive language. O ſuffer it ſtill to cry --and mingle not thine earthly paſſions with

with its virtuous and pure deſires! He that feedeth the young ravens, cannot be inſenſible to its wants, but will ſend it its proper food in due ſeaſon.

"Abba, Father!" methinks I hear another ſay--Full well I know theſe pleaſing ſounds—this language of Love is familiar to my ſoul! I felt it long before I underſtood its glorious import. With far more freedom than I could aſk any earthly parent to ſupply my temporal wants, I now cry, "Abba, "Father!" to my redeeming GOD. What though doubt, and darkneſs, and affliction, and temptations of every kind, do frequently ſurround me, yet I know in whom I have truſted. I know the Bleſſed Source, from whence my ſtrength and conſolation muſt proceed. "Who ſhall lay any thing to the "charge of GOD's Elect? It is GOD "that juſtifieth!"--"The law of the "Spirit of Life hath made me free

"from the law of ſin and death." This Spirit of Life hath begun, and I have a ſweet hope, that he will accompliſh his ſalutary work in my ſoul. The ſinful ſuggeſtions, ſnares, and temptations of my natural man, I feel, and expect to feel, till this body of ſin be laid breathleſs in the grave: but though I do feel them, though I ſhall feel them, though they are the Croſs which I muſt bear, the warfare in which I muſt perſevere as long as I live; though I cannot be permitted to lay down my arms till the battle is fought, till the victory is won, till, with my Dying LORD, I can ſay, "It is finiſhed;" yet, from a repeated experience of the power of his Grace, and the largeneſs of his Love, I am even now enabled to ſay, "Thanks be to GOD, who giveth me "the victory, through JESUS CHRIST "my LORD!" Though future difficulties, dangers, and temptations, ſhould preſent themſelves to my view—yea, "though I ſhould walk through the

"valley

" valley of the ſhadow of death—I will " fear no evil." For I have an humble hope and happy confidence, that my Redeemer will be with me; that his rod and ſtaff will ſupport me; and that, through realms of darkneſs, and legions of devils, he will conduct me ſafe to his own bright Abodes of Everlaſting Life, and Light, and Love.

DISCOURSE XX.

The Ground and Nature of Private and Public Worship.

Habakkuk, Chap. ii. Ver. 20.

This diſcourſe was preached at the Opening of a New Church, called ALL SAINTS CHURCH, in PENNSYLVANIA November 7th, 1773.

DISCOURSE XX.

HABAKKUK, CHAP. ii. VER. 20.

"THE LORD IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE:
"LET ALL THE EARTH KEEP SI-
"LENCE BEFORE HIM."

I Cannot enter upon the ſubject, which I have made choice of for the preſent ſolemn occaſion, without congratulating my audience, my countrymen, yea, all the inhabitants of this weſtern world, upon the rapid progreſs which True Religion hath already made on this American continent. The raven wing of the Apoſtate Seraph had for ages

ages been ſpread over its dark and trackleſs deſarts, brooding over and cheriſhing his own gloomy offspring, ignorance, error, ſuperſtition, and wrath, in every ſavage breaſt. Though "the LORD was at all "times in his Holy Temple," though the "earth and the fullneſs thereof was his," though his Illuminating and Beatifying Preſence was never limited to any part or parts of the great Temple of the Univerſe, but ſhone with as bright a luſtre in theſe weſtern wilds, as in the moſt flouriſhing churches of the eaſt; yet the darkneſs of untaught nature could not comprehend him. Though as near to the roaming Indian, as to the Heaven-taught Patriarch, Prophet, and Apoſtle; though "in him he lived, and "moved, and had his being" as much as they; yet, wanting the aids of an Outward Revelation, he knew not where to ſeek, or how to ſerve him.

Doubtleſs,

Doubtleſs, the ſeeds or principles of Truth and Goodneſs are implanted in every human heart. Some Glimpſes of Heaven, ſome Touches of Virtue, have been ſeen or felt by the darkeſt of mortals, in their darkeſt ſtate. The ſweetneſs hath, no doubt, been grateful to their ſouls; but ignorant of the Bleſſed Source from whence it came, they have been incapable of improving the little they had received, or of applying for more. "How beautiful, "then, upon the mountains, muſt be the "feet of thoſe that bring good tidings, "that publiſh peace; that bring good "tidings of good, that publiſh Salva-"tion; that ſay unto Zion, Thy GOD "reigneth! How welcome the watchmen that lift up their voices in the darkeſt corners of the Temple! who announce to thoſe who ſit in darkneſs there, that "the LORD is in his Holy "Temple;" and proclaim the true mode of worſhip, and only acceptable homage, that his creatures can render him, by calling

calling upon the whole "earth to be "ſilent before him." How pleaſing and glorious too, are the effects of this miniſtration? "The wilderneſs and the "ſolitary place are thereby made glad— "The deſart rejoices, and bloſſoms as "the roſe!" The very ſoil and its productions, are ſanctified; and goodly Churches are erected, and true ſpiritual worſhip is performed, on thoſe very ſpots, perhaps, where ſavage men and ſavage demons had heretofore held their infernal orgies.

The progreſs of civilization among our Indian natives, hath not indeed been very rapid; and conſequently, but few of their numerous tribes have yet been converted to Chriſtianity. But we truſt, that the ſame good Providence, who, for his own wiſe and gracious purpoſes, and not for any merit or righteouſneſs of ours, hath given us poſſeſſion of their territories, will render us, ere long, inſtrumental

inſtrumental of the greateſt good to them; and for the temporal inheritance, which we have acquired among them, will, through our means, ſecure to them or to their children an inheritance of Truth and Virtue here, and of immortal Glory hereafter.

In this view, and as tending to the accompliſhment of this great purpoſe, I conſider the erection of every new Church for Proteſtant worſhip in theſe colonies; and doubt not, but ſuch Labours of Love, will be remembered by the GOD OF LOVE, to all thoſe, who, with chearful hearts and liberal hands, have contributed thereunto.

Much Chriſtian commendation, therefore, my brethren, are we warranted from Scripture to give to you, who have at your own private coſt erected this plain, decent, and commodious building; and are now aſſembled, to dedicate it, with all

all due ſolemnity, to the ſervice of your GOD, and the GOD of your fathers.

This external dedication, or ſetting apart of the edifice itſelf to ſacred uſes, is a ceremony highly decent and proper, and founded upon primitive and patriarchal, as well as legal and evangelical uſage—The different modes of doing this, avail but little—the intention is good and pious, by whatever form it may be executed.

But more than this remains to be done — The Dedication of yourſelves, your ſouls and bodies, all that you are, and all that you have, to the LORD, as your juſt and reaſonable ſervice, is the ſubject which I would principally enlarge upon, as being the beſt improvement of the preſent occaſion. You have built a Temple unto the LORD. It is an " Holy Temple," as being dedicated to none but holy uſes--" The

" LORD

"LORD in his Holy Temple: let all
"the earth keep Silence before him."

This ſublime declaration and ſolemn precept of the Prophet, may be conſidered as relative to the proper Worſhip of GOD both in public and private. Indeed, theſe two kinds of Worſhip are neceſſarily connected, one being always preparatory to the other.

The Knowledge of GOD muſt be firſt obtained, before we can have any idea of the Worſhip that will be acceptable to him. But how is this Knowledge to be obtained? where are we to go in queſt of this moſt Deſirable Object? how are we to diſcover the Lovely Footſteps of Divinity?

In vain do we ſeek for GOD in arguments and reaſonings: the knowledge of his exiſtence and attributes, collected from the works of nature, may

ſatisfy our underſtandings, but cannot comfort our hearts. His own Bleſſed Revelation, without which we could never have known where to look for him, directs us to our own hearts.—There is his Holy Temple, in which he is to be ſpiritually worſhipped—we muſt find, we muſt feel his Preſence there—till we do ſo, we cannot be ſaid to have any true Knowledge of him. Thou canſt never reaſon the Atheiſt into an hearty belief of the exiſtence of a GOD—thou canſt never argue the Deiſt into a conviction of the neceſſity of a Redeemer—-The evils and miſeries of their preſent ſtate of exiſtence, muſt be intimately felt by both, before they can be led to look up for ſupport and conſolation to a Power ſuperior to their own weak nature.

Call off, therefore, O man! thine attention from outward things; and bow

bow thyſelf before the High GOD, in the Temple of thine own Heart! It is no difficult matter to inform thyſelf, when and how his Preſence is manifeſted within thee, when he ſpeaks, and what muſt be thy anſwer. His own Scriptures have given thee ample direction upon this important ſubject.

Every good and virtuous thought, every ſenſibility of Meekneſs, Humility, Patience, Reſignation and Love; every little riſing of conſcience againſt the ſuggeſtions of vice; every little check or reproach thou feeleſt for an unworthy thought, or a ſhameful action —all, all beſpeak a Preſent DEITY—a GOD and SAVIOUR, ſeeking to make himſelf known to thee in his Holy Temple; to awaken thee from the death of a ſinful earthly nature, in which thy Immortal Spirit is impriſoned, and to give thee Life, Heavenly Life and Liberty. O turn thee, then, to

this Propitious God! "Let all that is "of earth within thee, keep ſilence "before him."

It is true, the firſt appearances of the Divinity to the fallen ſpirit of man, are faint and ſhadowy, like the firſt feeble ray of morn that ſhoots athwart the gloom of night. But do thou obſerve the precept of the Prophet in my text; wait, and watch, in Awful Stillneſs; impoſe ſilence on the clamorous calls of every earth-born appetite and paſſion! ſtand in Meekneſs and Humility, with thine inward eye turned towards theſe firſt Emanations of Divine Light, and thou ſhalt ſoon perceive "the Day dawn, and "the Day-Star riſe upon thy ſoul."

Such is in general the nature of that private Worſhip, which man muſt offer up to God, in the Temple of his own Heart—Yea, and let me add, my brethren,

brethren, that this Private Worſhip, is the "Prayer without ceaſing," which the Apoſtle enjoins. We are never ſafe a moment, unleſs we are in this praying ſtate, unleſs this be the habitual frame of our ſouls.

By this Awful Silence, and Waiting upon the LORD in his Temple, we place ourſelves, as it were, upon hallowed ground; and, if I may borrow an image from ancient ſuperſtition, a magic Circle of Heavenly Light and Luſtre is drawn round us,—nor will the dark malicious enchanter, who only rules in Earth and Hell, dare to approach its radiant limits.

When our hearts are thus fitted and diſpoſed by inward and private Worſhip and Communion with GOD, we are not to neglect the aſſembling of ourſelves in the outward Temple of the LORD's Houſe. "We are to enter into his gates with

" thankſgiving, and into his courts with praiſe."—We muſt mingle our prayers and praiſes with our aſſembled brethren—The devout flame will thus be kindled from breaſt to breaſt--By a more than human Sympathy, each will aſſiſt his fellow-worſhippers; each will offer up his incenſe from the golden cenſer in his own heart; whilſt the whole aſcends in one fragrant cloud to the Throne of Grace, and is returned upon the humble worſhippers in ſhowers of Divine Benignity and Love.

As the true and acceptable Worſhip of GOD, is emphatically expreſſed in my text, by " keeping Silence before " him;" it may be neceſſary to explain more particularly what this awful ſilence means, when applied to Public Worſhip, which ſeems to require a vocal and articulate expreſſion of our inward feelings.

Were

Were we all pure ſpirit, unembarraſſed with theſe groſs vehicles of clay, there is no doubt, but we might, even publicly, join in Silent Worſhip, and catch the fervours of devotion from each other, without the intervention of ſpeech or corporeal ſound. Or could we conceive an whole aſſembly of real Chriſtians, ſo far raiſed above the ſenſations of fleſh and blood, as to be alike capable of this pure ſpiritual intercourſe with Heaven; I ſee no reaſon, why ſuch an aſſembly might not publicly worſhip GOD in this ſilent ſpiritual way. But inaſmuch as the utmoſt ſtretch of charity could not lead us to form ſuch a judgment of any aſſembly upon earth, and as the preſent fallen ſtate of human nature renders it neceſſary for the moſt advanced Chriſtians to avail themſelves of external aids, ſo the Church of GOD, in every age, has had recourſe to them, and the SON OF GOD himſelf hath thought proper to inſtitute out-

ward ceremonies, accompanied by outward forms of prayer and thankſgiving, to aſſiſt us in this imperfect ſtate. Were we Angels, we might worſhip as Angels; but whilſt we are mere mortals, we can only worſhip as Men.

Indeed, we can have but very inadequate ideas of the Worſhip rendered to the great Creator by Angels and glorified Spirits. There is ſomething, however, inconceivably awful and ſublime in a few expreſſions which we meet with in the Revelation of St. John: "There was Silence in Heaven for about "the ſpace of half an hour."

"There is," ſays a truly enlightened Chriſtian, "a Communion, which language cannot expreſs, a Worſhip, that wants not the aid of words, nor is it to be defined by an harmony of

of ſounds, in which we approach the Sacred Author of Unutterable Love!"

"When there was Silence in Heaven "for about the ſpace of half an hour"—when the vocal tribute of "Holy, Holy, "Holy!" and the Hallelujahs of ſanctified ſpirits in endleſs felicity, were ſuſpended—their Worſhip ſtill continued in awful, holy, ſolemn inconceivable Silence! It was a rapturous adoration, too copious for language to expreſs—For no power of eloquence can ſufficiently acknowledge the obligation and reverence we owe to his Infinite Majeſty, who fills Heaven and Earth with his Glory and Goodness.

Doubtleſs there are times, when the ſanctified ſoul is conſtrained, as it were, to offer up the ſilent ſacrifice of the ſpirit, and when the ſacrifice of words muſt fail. Nor is this ſpiritual Worſhip in the leaſt checked, but rather promoted

promoted by public prayers and praiſes in the Houſe of GOD--The flame once raiſed by outward helps, will continue to blaze, when every form and appearance of the fuel is gone.

Our excellent Liturgy is admirably adapted to this ſolemn and ſpiritual Worſhip. The reſts and pauſes, in the different parts of it, where the congregation are ſilent, and the miniſter alone reads or prays, affords every worſhipper a full opportunity of making this ſilent ſacrifice—of humbling himſelf before the LORD in his Temple, of breathing forth his own deep-felt wants, and waiting in Stillneſs for an anſwer of Peace.

In a word, when applied to Public Worſhip, the Silence here enjoined, undoubtedly means that reverential awe and profound ſubmiſſion, which though due

due at all times, and in all places, from the creature to his adorable Creator, ſeems to be more immediately ſo, when we aſſemble together in places dedicated to his Worſhip, which, according to his own declaration, he favours with his more immediate Preſence, and where "his honour more particularly "dwells."

The public exerciſes or acts of piety, which are uſually performed in theſe places, are, Prayer, and the Adminiſtration of the Chriſtian Sacraments; to which is generally added Preaching, not conſidered as a part of Divine Worſhip, but as an uſeful and neceſſary inſtitution of CHRIST, to awaken ſinners, and to comfort the broken-hearted, to confirm and ſtrengthen the faithful, and to impart religious inſtruction to all. Theſe ſeveral duties, which ſhould engage the attention of all

Chriſtian

Chriſtian aſſemblies, can only be profitable, when they are performed or obſerved with the diſpoſition required in my text.

Whenever, therefore, my brethren, you are about to enter this Temple of the LORD, pauſe a moment at the threſhold! Conſider whoſe Preſence you are approaching! Conſider, that "the "LORD is in his Holy Temple"--- Reflect upon your own numberleſs wants, weakneſſes, and imperfections, and your own abſolute inability to ſupply, or relieve them. Leave all earthly deſires, cares, and anxieties behind you. Bring nothing, if poſſible, but a ſenſe of your ſins, and an earneſt deſire of being delivered from the guilt and dominion of them. If during the ſervice, or the ſermon, ſome ray of Divine Light ſhould dart into your breaſt, ſome touch of Love ſhould deeply affect

fect your heart, turn aſide immediately from the general ſervice. Keep Silence before the LORD, whilſt he is ſpeaking to your hearts—improve the Bleſſed Moment of ſweet Communion —and you will then taſte and ſee how gracious the LORD is; and from your own happy experience, be enabled to declare, that it is "good for you to "be here."

And now, O LORD GOD! great and glorious! who filleſt the heavens and the earth with the Majeſty of thy Glory, vouchſafe to fill even this lowly tabernacle with thy Gracious Preſence! Inſpire the hearts of thy miniſtering ſervants, and aſſembled people, with that true Wiſdom which cometh only from thee! Enable them to ſpeak the Truth in Love, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit! May

every

every member of this Congregation be, indeed, a member of CHRIST, a child of GOD, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven! May thouſands yet unborn, be enabled to praiſe thee for their Spiritual Birth and Reſurrection to a New Life, by the means of thy Goſpel preached here! And may all thoſe, who are miniſtered unto, as well as thoſe that miniſter, be endued with thy Holy Spirit, and enriched with thy Heavenly Grace! May they be proſpered with all happineſs here, and brought to thine Everlaſting Kingdom hereafter! Even ſo, we pray, through the merits, and for the ſake of JESUS CHRIST, thy SON, to whom with Thee and the Holy Spirit, One Eternal and Ever-Bleſſed GOD, be aſcribed all Honour, Power, Majeſty, and Dominion, now henceforth and for ever! Amen!

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM

FINIS.